HU SHENG

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Chapter I
ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW RELATIONSHIPS (1840-1864)

1. THE EASTWARD DRIVE OF THE FORCES OF AGGRESSION

This work begins with the Opium War of 1840-1842. It is first necessary, however, to deal briefly with China's relations with foreign powers prior to the war.

China's trade relations with Russia along the northern borders began more than two hundred years before the Opium War. Military clashes between the two countries ended during the reign of the Emperors Kang Xi and Yong Zheng (1662-1735) of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) by the conclusion of the Treaty of Nerchinsk of 1689 and the Treaty of Kiakhta of 1727. During the 16th and 17th centuries, when European capitalism was in the stage of primitive accumulation of capital, European merchants prowled the coastal areas of Guangdong and Fujian provinces and engaged in piratical activities. The Portuguese took Macao in 1557, and were followed by the Spaniards, the Dutch and the British who came to China in 1575, 1601 and 1637 respectively. All this took place during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The French sent their first merchant vessel to China in 1660 (in the 17th year of the reign of Emperor Shun Zhi of the Qing Dynasty).

In the 16th century, the Portuguese, who then ruled the seas, monopolized trade in the Far East; in the 17th century, they lost their leading position to the Dutch. In the 18th century, thanks to the activities of the East India Company, Britain was able to jump to the first place in European trade with China and the Far East. As a

result of the Industrial Revolution, Britain was the first country to establish bourgeois rule, and its industries, particularly the textile industry, expanded rapidly. The colonialists of the European countries had been engaged in overseas expansion. But while they plundered and fleeced the economically backward people and committed atrocities wherever they went, they behaved warily towards this big unified country in the Far East with its time-honoured cultural traditions. They contented themselves with robbing its people and cheating them in trade whenever an opportunity presented itself. From the middle of the 18th century, Britain began to act differently. The rising industrial capitalists who had accumulated tremendous fortunes and enough power to go ahead with their schemes of overseas expansion were anxious to convert the vast country of China into their own market in which they could sell their surplus commodities. So the British set out vigorously to "open up" China.

During this period, the Qing government was intensifying its policy of seclusion. From 1757, trade with foreign merchant ships was limited to the port of Guangzhou (previously it had, for a time, also been carried on in Xiamen in Fujian Province, and Ningbo and Dinghai in Zhejiang Province). Foreign trade in Guangzhou was placed under the control of the Qing government. Foreign merchants had to observe official regulations as to the duration of their stay, the choice of their living quarters and the scope of their activities in Guangzhou. Moreover, they could trade and do business only with authorized Chinese merchants. They were not allowed to trade with other merchants, or deal directly with the Chinese government. In 1793, the British government sent a special envoy, Lord Macartney, to the Chinese emperor to take up the question of improving trade relations between Britain and China. Although the British envoy was allowed to come to Beijing, he failed to attain his aim.

Why did the Qing government adopt a policy of seclusion? First, it was a logical reaction to the lawless conduct of the marauding European merchants after the 16th century. Secondly, the Qing government was prompted by the desire to save its own regime. For China's history shows that no matter what feudal dynasty ruled,

"danger from without" generally coincided with "trouble from within." The Qing rulers, a national minority themselves had forced their way into areas south of the Great Wall and established their rule by taking advantage of internal unrest during the Ming Dynasty. They, therefore, tried to protect themselves from the strange new forces coming from the other side of the world, and their vigilance towards foreigners was especially sharp at times when their rule was threatened by internal troubles. In 1759, Li Shiyao, Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi, submitted to the emperor a draft of "Regulations for the Control of Foreigners." He explained his reasons as follows:

> The foreigners who come to China from afar do not know the Chinese language; they used to conduct their business transactions in Guangzhou with the aid of interpreters among Chinese merchants who know foreign languages. Recently, however, a foreign merchant named James Flint understands both the local and Beijing dialects; he is even familiar with the subtleties of written Chinese. Besides, there are quite a few other foreign merchants who also know both spoken and written Chinese. How could these foreigners have learned Chinese if they had not been taught secretly by traitors? . . .
>
> It is my most humble opinion that when uncultured barbarians, who live far beyond the borders of China, come to our country to trade, they should establish no contact with the population, except for business purposes. Therefore, it is better to take precautionary measures to restrain them than to punish them after they have transgressed. . . .[1]

Thus it may be seen that from the standpoint of the Qing rules, for foreigners to become acquainted with the situation in China was something to be feared. They even shuddered at the thought that some foreigners could come to learn the Chinese language. What they were particularly afraid of was contact between foreigners and the people they ruled. All this, from their point of view, had to be prevented. In taking precautionary measures to restrain the activities of foreigners, the feudal autocratic rulers proceeded from the same motive that prompted them to guard against their own people, that is, to eliminate the source of menace to their power.

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[1] *Journal of Historical Sources* (in Chinese), published by the Palace Museum, Beijing, No. 9, p. 307.

The Chinese people, on their part, while they detested the piratical foreign merchants, had no anti-foreign prejudices and did not fear new things. From the beginning, they were not against peaceful trade between nations. If the Chinese people later showed themselves "anti-foreign" in their attitudes and actions, this was the result of aggressive wars and economic plunder carried out in China by imperialist and capitalist aggressors. The Qing rulers, on the other hand, intended their "anti-foreign policy" as a means of maintaining their rule. But when they discovered that such a policy was powerless against foreign gunboats they gradually switched to a policy of currying favour with foreigners, thus hoping to keep themselves in the saddle.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Britain continued to hold the leading position in trade with China. In 1784, soon after it gained its independence and became a sovereign state, the United States of America sent merchant vessels to Guangzhou. It rapidly gained ground in the trade with China, overtaking France and other countries early in the 19th century, but still lagging far behind Britain. Although the foreign powers were constantly bickering among themselves, they were unanimous on the question of opening up China for trade. It is not surprising that Britain, the most influential capitalist country at that time, took the lead in this mission. Russia at that time traded with China only along its northern borders. In 1805, it demanded from the Qing government equal privileges with other countries to trade through Guangzhou, but this demand was rejected.

At the turn of the century, the Qing rule, although outwardly powerful, was going through an internal crisis, which was most clearly manifested in the rumblings of unrest among the peasantry. In the early 19th century, peasant uprisings burst out one after another throughout the country. The uprisings failed to develop into large-scale peasant wars, yet, with the deterioration of the rural economy which was the basis of feudal rule, more and more impoverished peasants joined secret societies and in this way gradually enlarged the ranks of the "insurgents." Moreover, corruption was

paralysing the bureaucratic ruling machine, a phenomenon common to all feudal autocracies on the verge of collapse. For this reason the Qing rulers became all the more determined to resist the demands of foreign powers. In 1816, Britain sent another ambassador, Lord Amherst, to Beijing to establish diplomatic relations with China. Not only was the mission unsuccessful, but it led to a decree by the Qing court to the effect that thereafter no foreign envoys would be allowed to enter Beijing.

British trade with China had been monopolized by the East India Company, but the British capitalists at home were itching to have a finger in the pie and this led to the abolition of the monopoly of the East India Company in 1834. In the same year, the British government appointed Lord Napier as Superintendent of Trade in China, and sent him to Guangzhou to establish direct relations with the viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi. As he failed to obtain an audience with the viceroy, the British government prepared to use strong measures in dealing with China. In the eyes of British capitalists, with the abolition of the monopoly of the East India Company, the controls and restrictions imposed on foreign trade by the Chinese government constituted the only obstacle to their efforts of opening up the Far Eastern market. Efforts to remove such an obstacle could not fail to enlist the support of other powers. Hence, even if Lin Zexu[1] had not imposed a ban on the opium trade in 1839, another pretext for war would have been found.

The ban imposed by the Qing government on the opium trade and the confiscation of the opium smuggled into China were obviously lawful and reasonable. Britain's recourse to armed force to main-

[1] Lin Zexu (1785-1850) — special commissioner sent to Guangzhou by the Qing court in 1839 to put an end to the opium trade, was the leader of an opposition group in the Qing government. He confiscated and destroyed more than one million kilogrammes of opium smuggled into Guangzhou by British and American merchants, and also laid down strict rules prohibiting foreign vessels from bringing opium to Chinese ports. On the pretext of protecting trade, the British government dispatched forces to China in February 1840 and started a war. With the support of the people, Lin repulsed the British attacks. Later, he was dismissed by the Qing court under the pressure of the capitulators.

tain its dirty trade was a brazen act. But as it dared not openly use "opium" as a pretext to unleash the war, it raised complaints that the Chinese government was subjecting British traders in China to all sorts of "unequal treatment." Every country, however, is within its rights in formulating regulations governing foreign trade through its own ports. For Britain to resort to war on this account was entirely unwarranted. The real point was that Britain launched the war to expand its economic sway by using armed force to enslave the Chinese people. It was, in other words, a war of aggression. Therefore, when the war broke out, the Chinese people supported Lin Zexu, who stood for resolute resistance in Guangdong. The British forces when they landed on Chinese soil massacred and looted in the usual fashion of colonial wars. Thus, a widespread bitter enmity of the Chinese people towards the "foreign devils" was aroused for the first time.

The unity in action between China's rulers and people which manifested itself during the war did not last long. Soon the rulers changed their attitude towards the war from firmness to oscillation and ultimately to compromise. At first, the Qing government, fearing that foreign influences might sap its ruling position, went to war unhesitatingly. But when British forces occupied the coastal areas of Zhejiang Province and began to menace Dagu and Tianjin in the North, the Qing government, alarmed by the course of events, hurriedly dismissed Lin Zexu and sued for peace. It had not the faintest idea, however, of Britain's real strength, for when negotiations failed, it again shifted to a policy of war. One moment it was for war, the next moment it was proposing peace. The responsible heads in the provinces acted independently, with the result that while hostilities were going on in one province, another province would offer money to the enemy and sue for peace. The people not only had to bear war costs but had to pay "peace contributions"; they suffered both from the savagery of the alien invaders and from molestation by their own armies. The war continued on and off for two years. Finally in 1842, when the British forces advancing from Shanghai reached Nanjing, the Qing government decided to accept a humiliating peace and signed the first of the unequal treaties with

foreign powers in modern history — the Treaty of Nanking (Nanjing). How in these circumstances could the people be expected to stand behind the government? There were two spontaneous anti-British popular movement in Guangzhou in 1841 and 1842, both of which were suppressed by the Qing authorities. This showed the marked difference in the positions taken by the feudal rulers and the Chinese people towards foreign aggression. The patriotic struggle of the Chinese people against the foreign capitalist aggressors began from the day the Qing government signed the first treaty which sold out China to a foreign power.

The Opium War thus proved to be a turning point. It ushered in the oppression of the Chinese nation by imperialism and intensified the antagonism between the autocratic rulers and the Chinese people. It also brought about a hitherto unknown kind of political relationship between China and the capitalist countries with aggressive ambitions. At the beginning of the war, the foreign aggressors had regarded the Qing government as an obstacle to their having a free hand in China. The outcome of the war convinced them, however, that it was vulnerable to the threat of force and could be coerced into submission. As a result of the Opium War, the anti-foreign policy hitherto firmly adhered to by the Qing government was shaken to its foundations for the first time. The Chinese people, on the other hand, showed that they were a force which would not compromise with foreign aggression. This new situation took clear shape in the events that occurred in the twenty years after the Opium War and indeed these twenty years may be taken as a distinct period in the history of China. When the period ended, as we shall see, the foreign aggressors were working hand in glove with the feudal rulers in applying force against the Chinese people.

2. THE OFFICIALS, THE PEOPLE AND THE FOREIGNERS

By the Treaty of Nanking (1842), Britain exacted from China an indemnity totalling 21,000,000 silver dollars and robbed China of its territory of Hongkong. China was forced to open Guangzhou,

Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo and Shanghai to trade and in practice to fix tariff rates on British goods by mutual agreement. In 1843, China signed with Britain the "general regulations under which the British trade is to be conducted at the five ports of Guangzhou, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai" as well as the Supplementary Treaty known as the Treaty of Humen (the Bogue). The Supplementary Treaty contained articles concerning "extraterritoriality" and the "most-favoured-nation treatment."

Although the United States had not participated in the war of 1840, many American traders were engaged in the opium trade, and during the war, the United States government sent a naval squadron to the Far East. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Nanking and the Treaty of Humen, the United States appointed Caleb Cushing as Minister Plenipotentiary to China and through him threatened and blackmailed China into making concessions. In a note to Cheng Yucai, Governor of Guangdong and concurrently Acting Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi, Cushing went so far as to declare that refusal on the part of China to grant American demands might be regarded as an invitation to war.[1] The outcome of the Cushing mission was the conclusion of the Treaty of Wanghia (Wangxia)[2] in 1844. Like the Treaty of Nanking, it provided for the opening of the five ports to American traders. Besides it imposed on China more concrete obligations in regard to "extraterritoriality," "fixed tariff duties," and the "most-favoured-nation treatment." In the same year, France, following the example of Britain and the United States, demanded that China conclude an analogous treaty and the Sino-French Treaty of Whampoa (Huangpu) was signed. As its trade with China was not so large as that of the other two powers, France attached special importance to the privilege of propagating Christianity in China. It exacted this privilege from the Qing government and both Catholic and Protestant faiths were recognized as lawful and the missionaries of the Western countries gradually penetrated into China in the wake of their guns and merchandise.

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[1] See Li Baohong, *Sino-American Diplomatic Relations* (in Chinese), p. 41.

[2] Wangxia was a village near Macao.

The various treaties signed between 1842 and 1844 showed that, after its military defeat, the Qing government ungrudgingly made a series of concessions and enabled the capitalist countries to lay a solid foundation for their imperialist policy in China. Yilibu and Qiying, who were responsible for directing the foreign affairs of the Qing government, gradually discarded their haughty attitude towards foreigners. What agitated their minds most now was how to satisfy the demands of the foreigners without losing their own "face"; to their country's long-range and vital interests they were completely indifferent.

Take, for instance, the most-favoured-nation clause in the Treaty of Humen. Article VIII of this treaty ran as follows:

> Should the emperor hereafter, from any cause whatever, be pleased to grant additional privileges or immunities to any of the subjects or citizens of such foreign countries, the same privileges and immunities will be extended to and enjoyed by British subjects.

The Chinese high commissioners who were responsible for concluding this treaty thought that this was an act of magnanimity and would save China from being involved in controversies with foreign countries in the future. They little realized that this very concession was to create a precedent for the "unilateral most-favoured-nation treatment." Again, the Treaty of Nanking merely provided for the opening of five ports to trade; none of its articles referred to the establishment of foreign settlements. But the local officials in Shanghai did not hesitate to accept the demands presented to them by Britain, the United States and France for establishing foreign settlements in certain areas of Shanghai. Such being the case, it was only natural that the aggressors were thankful to the Qing government and the officials in its service.

All the same, the aggressors were far from completely satisfied with the privileges they had wrangled out of China. Economically, the area legally opened to foreign trade was limited to five treaty ports and these were all situated on the southeast coast. Foreigners were still barred from the north coast and the vast interior. Therefore, their trade with China following the conclusion of these treaties failed to expand as rapidly and as extensively as they had hoped.

Politically, the Qing government persisted in refusing to accept foreign diplomatic representatives in Beijing, considering that a concession on this question would involve a loss of "face." With the situation as it was then, permission to accredited foreign diplomatic personnel to reside in Beijing would have been tantamount to declaring to the whole people that the all-mighty throne had bowed to the foreign powers. Therefore, the Qing government clung vigorously to its "face," though it did not hesitate to make more concessions on the question of trade and other matters. When signing the four treaties, the aggressors concentrated on provisions which mainly affected their practical interests and therefore did not press their demand on this question. Gradually, however, they came to a conclusion that in order to keep China under their control they must secure the right for their envoys to reside in Beijing.

It was with the aim of consolidating and extending the political and economic privileges they had acquired in China that the British and French aggressors, 15 years after the conclusion of the Opium War, launched another war against China (1857-1860). This war came to be known as the Second Opium War. In order to give a proper perspective of the development of the political relations between China and the foreign powers during the period between the first and second Opium Wars, it is necessary first to deal with the disputes, which occurred at Guangzhou after the conclusion of the Treaty of Nanking.

The foreign powers, unable to send diplomatic representatives to Beijing, had so far established contact and negotiated only with the officials at the specified treaty ports. The Qing government entrusted the direction of its foreign affairs to the viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi, who had his headquarters at Guangzhou. Thus Guangzhou became the centre of China's foreign relations. No sooner had the Nanking Treaty been signed when the British demanded the opening of Guangzhou and the right of entry into the city. The treaty, however, contained no reference to British entry into the city. The population of Guangzhou raised protest after protest against the British demands; placards in red and white were pasted up in

every street, attacking the officials who had compromised with the British and appealing to both the gentry and the people to get ready to repulse the British should they force their way in. The dispute over the British entry into the city of Guangzhou lasted more than ten years. Not until the Second Opium War were the British able to fight their way into Guangzhou. The struggle waged by the people in Guangzhou bears out the fact that, during the Opium War, it was the Qing rulers, and not the people, who had submitted. The fact that the people, with the degree of political consciousness they possessed at the time, had put up resolute resistance, not only alarmed the aggressors but greatly worried the Qing rulers. Thus in the ten-year-old dispute over the British entry into the city of Guangzhou we may see clearly the changes which took place in the relationships between the officials, the people and the foreigners (the feudal rulers, the common people and the forces of aggression) after the Opium War.

In December 1842, four months after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, an incident occurred in Guangzhou in which English sailors were involved in a fight with the Chinese. After some foreign business houses had been burned down, Qi Gong, Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi, wrote to the court:

> After the ships of the British barbarians returned to Hongkong from Fujian and Zhejiang, the foreigners became more and more insolent. There are many cases in which foreign sailors who live in the 13 foreign hongs maltreated the common people, robbed shops when drunk and insulted women who passed by. The local officials took measures to suppress these disturbances and because of this they did not develop into serious incidents. However, the population, filled with resentment, was all for settling accounts with the foreign barbarians. On the 23rd day of the 10th moon, someone, acting in the name of the "Ming Lun Tang," pasted up placards, denouncing the crimes of the foreigners and threatening retaliatory action.... On the afternoon of the 6th day of the 11th moon (December 7, 1842 — *H.S.*), a British sailor bought fruit from a Chinese in the vicinity of the 13 foreign hongs but refused to pay. The vendor asked him to pay and in reply the sailor stabbed and wounded him. This was witnessed by a crowd of people who were greatly outraged by the act. Realizing he was in the wrong, the sailor ran away to the tall building where he lived and bolted the gate. The crowd pursued him home. Excitement grew as the people surrounding the building shouted at the foreigners. The latter flung stones at the crowd from the

upper story of the building. On being informed of this incident, we at once instructed the local officials to go to the spot to investigate and to restore order. By night the crowd had gradually dispersed. Suddenly the building went up in flames.... Afterwards, the spot was watched and guarded day and night by officers and men and it has been quiet since the 7th. Realizing that they had roused the ire of the local populace, the foreigners became very frightened. But when the officials saw to their safety, the foreigners calmed down and expressed gratitude to the authorities. . . .[1]

Judging from this report, the situation was very clear: the people had every reason to rise against foreigners, and the officials, occupied as they were with appeasing the foreigners, had obviously failed in their duty to protect the people.

In 1843, Qiying, who had signed the Treaty of Nanking, was sent to Guangdong as imperial commissioner. As soon as he arrived he charged "the local riff-raff" with engineering all the anti-foreign outbursts. He added: "Mutual suspicions and mistrust have poisoned the relations between the people and the foreigners and if these are not handled properly untoward incidents will again occur."[2] It is clear that he was trying to present the officials as being superior both to the people and the foreigners and at the same time as neutrals in the disputes between them. In fact, what the officials did was to suppress the people and to appease the foreigners. It was not surprising therefore that the people felt very strongly about this situation. According to an Englishman, many of the placards appearing in the streets of Guangzhou strongly attacked the local authorities. One placard, for instance, read in part:

Our cannibal mandarins have hitherto been the accomplices of the English robbers in all the acts that the latter have committed against order and justice. . . . In the fifth moon of the present year, many Chinese have been slain by foreigners; their bodies have been flung into the river, and buried in the bellies of fishes; but our high authorities have treated these affairs as though they have never heard of them; they have looked upon these foreign devils as though they were gods; they have despised the Chinese as though they had the flesh of dogs; and have not

[1] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Dao Guang)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 64, pp. 20-21.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. 66, p. 41.

valued the life of men more than the hair which is shorn from the head. They persist in keeping the throne in ignorance of what is passing, and in neglecting to treat this affair with the importance it deserves. Thousands of people are filled with grief and anger; sorrow has penetrated the marrow of their bones, and their sole consolation is to express their woes in the public assemblies.[1]

Thus, Cao Lutai, Supervising Censor of Huguang (Hubei and Hunan), was not wrong when he wrote in a memorial to the throne in 1846:

> The deep cleavage between the officials and the people in eastern Guangdong has existed for quite a long time.... The hostility of the people of Guangdong towards the British means nothing less than the hostility of the people towards the local officials.[2]

In January 1846, Qiying, Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi, bowed to the British and proclaimed the city of Guangzhou open to foreigners. The people at once rose in revolt against this decision and burned down the office of the prefect. For a time, confusion reigned in Guangzhou. And because of popular opposition, the settlement of the question of the opening of Guangzhou was deferred.

In these circumstances, the British would have had to cope with a lot of trouble if they had tried to force their way into Guangzhou. They thought it best to do nothing but watch warily. It was precisely because of this that they resented all the more bitterly the inability of the Qing officials to suppress the people's anti-foreign sentiments so as to ensure "the implementation of the treaty obligations." In 1847, British gunboats forced their way into the Pearl River and, making use of threats, compelled Qiying to agree to open the city of Guangzhou in two years' time. Reporting to the emperor, Qiying wrote: "During the past few years I have done everything possible to mediate in the dispute between the people and the foreigners, yet, this has not prevented the latest incident, I am deeply ashamed of myself."[3] Qiying, throughout, had regarded

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[1] H. F. MacNair, *Modern Chinese History: Selected Readings*, the Commercial Press, Limited, Shanghai, 1927, p. 224.

[2] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Dao Guang)*, (in Chinese). Vol. 75, p. 13.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. 77, p. 37.

the dispute as one concerning only the people and the foreigners, with the officials playing the role of mediators between them.

After the Opium War, the Qing authorities were still ignorant of the size of the foreigners' appetite. Whenever the foreigners used threats, they submitted to their dictates and flouted the opinion of the people. But when the foreigners appeared more or less "appeased" and the feeling of the people was running high they hesitated about doing what the foreign powers wanted them to do, calculating that it was in their own interests to heed a little the voice of the people.

In view of the unmistakable mood of the people of Guangzhou, and seeing that the British were wavering on the question of the opening of the city of Guangzhou and had actually agreed to put it off for another two years, the Qing authorities felt that, despite their position of mediators between the people and the foreigners, they would be well advised to lean a little more towards the people. Therefore, when in 1849 the British demanded fulfilment of the promise to open the city of Guangzhou, Xu Guangjin who had succeeded Qiying as Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi, refused to comply with the demand and lectured the British in the following terms: "The people are the pillars of the state and since the people have refused to open the city of Guangzhou, the emperor is in no mood to force them to do so just to please foreigners."[1]

As a matter of fact, the people of Guangzhou, irrespective of the attitude the authorities might assume in this matter, had organized and trained themselves into a force of more than one hundred thousand men, holding themselves in readiness to resist. In these circumstances, Xu Guangjin considered it well advised to adopt a strong policy towards the foreigners, knowing well that to act otherwise would bring the weight of the one hundred thousand men upon his own head.

Explaining to the emperor the reason for his policy, Xu wrote:

> To parry off the British demand would not necessarily precipitate incidents (that is to say, it was still possible to hold the British off with

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. 79, p. 44.

promise and delaying tactics — *H.S.*). On the contrary, acquiescence in their demands would certainly lead to a clash of arms (that is to say, the people would have taken arms to repel the aggressor — *H.S.*). Moreover, if we deny them entry into the city, thus bringing on untoward incidents, the people will rise and we may depend on their support (that is to say, the strength of the people can be brought into play — *H.S.*). If, however, we acquiesce in the foreigners' demand and allow them to enter the city, the people will rise and this will lead to internal and external disturbances (that is to say, the people would rise against the government — *H.S.*).[1]

Thus, Xu Guangjin's policy was based on the same motives as that of Qiying: both tried to follow a course of action calculated to ward off the most imminent danger facing the feudal rulers. The strong policy followed by Xu Guangjin had nothing in common with the stand taken by the people.

The officials posed as mediators between the people and the foreigners, but this political manoeuvre failed to eliminate the contradictions between the people and the rulers. Soon there arose the great Taiping Uprising. And the foreign aggressors suspected the Qing government of deliberately fostering anti-foreign sentiments among the people. Although the question of the British entry into the city of Guangzhou was temporarily deferred, the powers soon put forward a demand for a revision of all treaties, hoping to extend the economic and political rights acquired by the Treaty of Nanking which they considered still inadequate. They were prepared to use force to settle accounts with the Qing government.

3. BLACKMAIL IN THE GUISE OF NEUTRALITY

Less than ten years after the conclusion of the Treaty of Nanking, the country was swept by the great movement of the Taiping Uprising. Not only did it cause a tremendous upheaval in the political life of China but it also had far-reaching repercussions on China's relations with foreign powers. The powers which had extended their tentacles of aggression to China had to consider seriously as to what attitude they should assume in this situation.

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. 79, p. 43.

The great Taiping Uprising led by Hong Xiuquan and Yang Xiuqing broke out early in 1851. The hunger-stricken peasants suffering under the autocratic Qing rule threw themselves into this struggle for existence. They set up a government of their own and organized an army which dealt telling blows to the Qing troops. The fact that this peasant army professed a variant of Christianity naturally intrigued the foreign aggressors, who were particularly impressed with the tempo with which this peasant army had grown in strength. Setting out from its base in Guangxi, the peasant army overran Hunan and Hubei, forced its way into Anhui and drove along the lower reaches of the Changjiang River, making mincemeat of the Qing forces along the way. In less than three years, it extended its influence to six provinces, routing the Qing armed forces which had been amassed from all parts of the country to contain and suppress the uprising. In March 1853, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom set up its capital at Nanjing. Thereafter it became a consolidated political force in opposition to the Qing government; China was divided into two states.

At first, a number of foreign missionaries and merchants in China sympathized with the Taipings. Dissatisfied with the prevarication and procrastination of the Qing government and its officials, who were unable to satisfy every one of their demands, they placed their hopes in the new political force which professed Christianity, calculating that if this new force could unite the whole of China under its control, it would, unlike the obdurate Qing government, throw open China to foreign trade and missionary activities. With a view to obtaining a true picture of the Taiping army, the British Minister, G. Bonham; the French Minister, M. de Bourboulon; and the American Minister, Robert M. McLane, one after another visited Taiping-occupied Nanjing. Some members of these missions were favourably impressed by what they had seen there. For instance, W. H. Medhurst, a British missionary in China, wrote a report on this subject on the basis of some of the Taiping documents which had come into Bonham's hands. Bonham transmitted this report to the British Foreign Office. It read in part:

> The advantages to be anticipated from the success of the insurgents are the opening of the country to religious and commercial enterprise,

and the introduction of scientific improvements, which will benefit both the giver and the receiver. It would be sad to see Christian nations engaged in putting down the movement, as the insurgents possess an energy, and a tendency to improvement and general reform (as witness their calendar) which the Imperialists never have exhibited, and never can be expected to display. . . . And it is possible that European nations, if engaged on the opposite side, would be going to war with some people in some respects better than themselves. Should the Imperialists, unaided by foreigners, prevail over the insurgents (of which there seems little probability) they will become much more exclusive and insolent than before. . . .[1]

The report showed that these foreigners failed to understand that the Taiping Uprising was, in its nature, a revolutionary peasant war. Nonetheless, they saw the patent superiority of the Taipings over the Qing government in that the former possessed a tendency to progressive reform. The course proposed in this report was as follows:

> The only policy that appears at present advisable, is to keep ourselves from being involved any further in the quarrel, and to avoid all government connection with either party. Foreigners should be prepared, however, with a sufficient force to resist any attack which the insurgents may be induced to make on them to their own destruction.[2]

This was the policy of "neutrality" which the United States, France and Britain formally adopted in relation to China at this time.

Of course, neutrality in the Chinese civil war was the only proper attitude for the powers to adopt. Had the foreign powers given moral sympathy to the Taipings, while recognizing the belligerent rights of the two parties in their actions and completely refraining from intervening in the Chinese civil war, their attitude would have benefited the revolutionary Taipings. As Medhurst pointed out, in view of the situation then obtaining, there was little likelihood that the Qing government, unaided by foreigners, could prevail over the Taiping army.

It is necessary, however, to delve deeper to see the real meaning of the policy of "neutrality" pursued by Britain, the United States and other powers. As a matter of fact, the policies of the powers were

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[1] MacNai, op. cit., p. 346.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 346.

determined not by the progress China might be able to make in the sphere of politics and science but by their own interests. These powers pursued a policy of "neutrality" simply because they desired to wait and see, to avail themselves of an opportunity, in the complicated situation in China, to deliberate on the measures that would best serve them in exacting additional privileges.

As for the Taipings, they did not yet know how to conduct a revolutionary foreign policy towards foreign aggressors. However, being naturally imbued with the integrity of the revolutionary people, they never showed the slightest obsequiousness to the foreign powers. Although the foreigners had entertained hopes that the Taipings would open the whole of China to them and accept their demands in full, they were unable to obtain definite assurances from the Taiping leaders that such would be the case. The Qing rulers, it was true, had not completely thrown overboard the haughtiness they had displayed towards foreigners before the Opium War, but the latter had learned from experience in that war that the Qing government could be bullied into submission. Moreover, the treaties concluded as a result of the Opium War were now used as a handle by the aggressors for imposing further demands on China. Thus, their policy of "neutrality" was in practice a policy of blackmail vis-à-vis the Qing government.

In 1853, Britain proposed to the United States government that joint action be taken in China, saying that it was most opportune for them to take advantage of the crisis facing China to force it to open up the whole country to foreign trade. The American Secretary of State, William Marcy, lost no time in instructing the U.S. Minister in China, Humphrey Marshall, that the United States should hold fast to the treaty provisions and maintain a neutral attitude towards the Chinese civil war. Marcy added that it might be possible to do much in this regard in any crisis that "does or may exist in China to cause an abandonment of the unwise restrictions imposed by China on foreign intercourse."[1] This shows that the United States intended to

[1] Tyler Dennett, *Americans in Eastern Asia*, the Macmillan Company, New York, 1922, pp. 213-214.

adopt an insidious policy of fishing in troubled waters. In fact, the three powers, Britain, the United States and France, while proclaiming a policy of "neutrality", banded together to present their demands for a revision of treaties, clearly with the intention of taking advantage of China's critical internal situation to extend their rights and interests in China. In 1854, American Minister McLane presented Yiliang, Viceroy of Liangjiang (Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Anhui), with a demand for a revision of treaties. Yiliang quoted McLane as saying:

> If the requests are granted, the United States will come to the aid of China in putting down the rebellion (i.e. helping the Qing government to crush the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom — *H.S.*). Otherwise, I will report everything to my government and we shall deal with the situation as we see fit.[1]

This is a clear case of cajolery combined with threats.

In 1854, the diplomatic representatives of the three powers, Britain, the United States and France, presented a joint demand for a revision of treaties. At first, they negotiated the matter in Guangdong and Jiangsu but these negotiations proved fruitless. In October of the same year, they sailed north for negotiations with the Chinese officials off Dagu. The following year, the United States appointed an "Old China Hand," Peter Parker, as Minister to China. He was a man full of aggressive imperialist schemes, and he joined the British and French envoys in pressing the demand for a revision of treaties. The contents of the demand made by the powers may be seen from the instructions the United States and British governments had given their envoys. The main points stressed in the instructions the British government sent its minister in 1854 were: (1) the opening of the whole interior of China and the cities on the coast to British trade, or failing this, to demand free navigation of the Changjiang River and the opening of Zhenjiang, Nanjing, Wenzhou, and Hangzhou as new treaty ports; (2) legalization of the opium trade; (3) abolition of inland transit dues on British goods; (4) permission for foreign envoys to reside in Beijing, or failing this,

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[1] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Xian Feng)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 8, p. 19.

to regulate the correspondence with responsible officials of the Chinese government, as well as to secure direct access to provincial viceroys.[1] In 1855, the United States Government instructed Parker: (1) to demand that American diplomatic representatives be permitted to reside in Beijing; (2) to demand the lifting of all restrictions on American trade in China; (3) to demand the abolition of all restrictions on the activities of Americans in China.[2] All this was nothing short of blackmail designed to compel the Qing government to give in completely.

The Qing government could not but be perplexed by the turn of events. The peasants had taken up arms to fight for their right of existence and to overthrow the Qing rule. The foreigners, far from being satisfied with the concessions made to them by the treaties concluded after 1842, were becoming harsher in their demands. For the Qing government, it was a moment when internal troubles and external menace combined to jeopardize its position. Hemmed in between the people and foreign aggressors, what attitude did it choose to take?

As shown above, after the Opium War, the Qing rulers followed a double-edged policy, wavering between the people and the foreigners, ready to compromise with the side which constituted a direct threat to their tottering regime in order to tide over a critical period. But now the Taiping made it clear that they were out to overthrow the existing political and social order in its entirety, and therefore represented a much graver threat than the commotion which had been caused by the people's opposition to the opening of Guangzhou in 1846. The Qing government decided that, come what may, it would not compromise with the "insurgents," and that it would fight them with all its power. Henceforth, it was a foregone conclusion that the Qing would go to any lengths to appease the foreign aggressors in order to be free to wage an all-out struggle against the Taipings. The situation in a nutshell was that the foreign

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[1] See H. B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire*, Longmans, Green, and Co., London, 1918, Vol. 1, p. 414.

[2] Dennett, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

aggressors saw that the moment was most opportune to blackmail the Qing rulers, minor concessions no longer satisfied their insatiable appetites. At the same time, the Qing rulers, seeing that there were signs of the foreigners taking the side of the Taipings, feared that they would really come to the aid of the "insurgents." If concessions were made to the foreigners, would they be induced to modify their hostile attitude towards the Qing government and establish "friendly relations" with it? This question continued to trouble the minds of the Qing rulers.

It was the officials in Shanghai who set a precedent of making concessions to the foreign aggressors on local issues. The "Xiao Dao Hui" (Small Sword Society), which had been organized by the people in the suburbs of Shanghai and had rallied to the cause of the Taiping Uprising, occupied the city in September 1853 before the Taiping army had reached the Shanghai area. The Taotai of Shanghai, Wu Jianzhang, took refuge in the foreign settlement. The customs could no longer collect duties. Moreover, Britain and the United States made every effort to obstruct the restoration of customs services, and foreign ships, taking advantage of this situation, refused to pay duties. In June 1854, Wu Jianzhang negotiated an agreement with consuls of the treaty powers in Shanghai, whereby the collection of customs duties was entrusted to a commission composed of three foreigners, a Briton, an American and a Frenchman, appointed by their consuls. This was how the foreigners, without much effort, took the customs administration of an important Chinese port into their own hands. This precedent served to strengthen their conviction that, by taking advantage of the situation and by deft manoeuvring, they would encounter no difficulties in exacting all that they wanted from the Qing government and its officials.

With regard to the demands of the three powers for an all-round revision of treaties, it was also the officials in Shanghai who from the very beginning had advocated a policy of compromise. In August 1854, the governor of Jiangsu, Jierhanga of Manchu nationality, memorialized the court in the following words after he had talked with American Minister McLane:

> McLane stubbornly clings to the provision of the Treaty of 1844, stipulating that a revision is to be effected 12 years after the signing of the treaty. He has expressed the wish that all the ports along the Changjiang River up to Hankou be opened. The situation is such that there seems no way out. Therefore we had better temporize and appoint a trustworthy highranking official to come down to negotiate an agreement with the American Minister and grant his request.

He was of the opinion that if "events should lead to a rupture at a time when Nanjing is still occupied by the insurgents, the powers will invade the Changjiang River. In that case, they will be in no mood to negotiate and, consequently, any action on our part will be taken under the pressure of their threats. If we continue to act awry, we will expose the Changjiang River to another great danger."[1] The proposal submitted by Jierhanga was not immediately approved by the Qing court. In fact, he was reprimanded in an "imperial edict." In the opinion of the Qing court the "appropriate measures" vis-à-vis the foreigners were: "Show them our magnanimity and at the same time dampen their insolence so as to prevent them from reviving their wild demands." At the same time, armed forces "should closely guard the ports in the lower reaches of the Changjiang River to prevent foreign warships from forcing their way in to establish contact with the rebels."[2] This shows that the Qing government had already adopted a policy of appeasement towards the aggressors but that it still suspected they might co-operate with the Taipings. With the Taiping army directly threatening Jiangsu, the governor of this province, Jierhanga, who had conducted negotiations with the foreign envoys, firmly believed that the foreigners were sincere and trustworthy and that a policy of compromise would pay in the end. He wrote:

> If the foreigners harbour any intentions to aid the rebels and encroach upon the government (that is to say, should they support the Taiping Uprising and oppose the Qing government — *H.S.*), they can do so at any time they wish since the Changjiang River is already in rebel hands. Yet their representatives take the trouble to go all the way to Guangzhou,

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[1] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Xian Feng)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 8, p. 35.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 5.

Shanghai and Tianjin to negotiate with us. This fact seems to indicate that they bear no malice towards us.[1]

In other words, the demands of the powers for the revision of treaties were taken as a manifestation of goodwill towards the Qing government. And what would happen if the government did not reciprocate this goodwill?

If foreign merchants make trouble and refuse to pay taxes, not only will the garrison of Shanghai be left without pay and supplies, but the crews of the war junks at Nanjing and Jingkou (Zhenjiang) will also be placed in a similar position.[2]

This meant that, in order to suppress the Taipings, the Qing rulers considered that it would be against their interests if they did not reach a compromise with the foreign powers. In reality, the Qing government, already in financial straits, found it very difficult to carry on a serious war against the Taipings. The customs duties paid by foreign merchants constituted an important source of revenue for the upkeep of the Qing army. The Qing officials in Shanghai were very much alive to the vital importance of this question and for this reason they were the first to come forward with proposals for a compromise in foreign policy. In fact, they were the first to give effect to such a policy of compromise by handing over the control of the customs administration in Shanghai to foreigners.

In October 1854, the British and American envoys sailed north and arrived off Dagu demanding direct negotiations with the government in Beijing on the question of the revision of treaties. The negotiations were put in the charge of Chonglun, who, after his talks with the envoys, memorialized the court:

Proposals deemed acceptable should be referred to the provincial viceroys and governors dealing with foreign affairs for careful study and necessary action in the light of the original treaties to show the foreigners that we are ready to appease them. . . . If they return empty-handed, they will feel extremely resentful. Though they dare not resort to any rash action right now, we may find it more difficult to deal with them if they choose to intrigue against us at a time when all is not going well in the South.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 48.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p. 39.

This was another plea for a compromise in foreign policy. By now, the Qing government, which regarded the revolutionary people as its implacable enemy, had already made the policy of compromise its guiding principle in dealing with the foreign aggressors. But with old suspicions still lingering in its minds, it hesitated about granting all the demands raised by the foreigners, though it was ready to make partial and minor concessions. Such being the case, the 1854 negotiations for the revision of treaties came to nothing.

The powers were determined to make the most of the situation and pressed the Qing government for all-round concessions. If negotiations failed to serve their purpose, they were ready to resort to force. In 1854-56, however, Britain and France were occupied with the Crimean War and were unable to divert their forces to the Far East. So it was not until late in 1856 that, using as a pretext a minor incident (the lorcha "Arrow" incident)[1] they launched a war against China. Although, for internal political reasons, the United States took no direct part in the war, its diplomatic representatives acted in complete harmony with the British and French representatives. Tsarist Russia also had a share in the affair, sending an envoy to Hongkong to consult with the British, French and American Ministers on ways and means to bring pressure upon China. When, in 1857, the Anglo-French navies sailed northward, all the four envoys accompanied the invading forces. So it may be said that the Second Opium War had been plotted jointly by the four powers, Britain, France, the United States and Russia, although it was waged only by the Anglo-French forces.

4. FIGHTING AND WOOING

To begin with, it is necessary to clarify the causes of the Second Opium War. This war broke out at a time when the Qing forces

[1] In October 1856, the lorcha "Arrow," a Chinese vessel lying in Guangzhou harbour, was searched by Chinese officers for smuggling. Several persons on board suspected of being pirates were arrested. The British intervened. Claiming that the lorcha was a Hongkong-registered British vessel flying British flag, they used this incident as a pretext to start war against China.

were locked in fierce battles with the Taiping army in the Changjiang region, with the issue of the struggle hanging in the balance. It was not because the Qing rulers had decided not to yield any more to the foreign aggressors. On the contrary, they were fully prepared to give in so as to prosecute the civil war with all the resources at their disposal, but the concessions they had already made had failed to satisfy the foreign aggressors, only serving to whip up their appetite. At the same time, it was certainly not out of their sympathy for the Taipings that the powers took up arms against the Qing government. On the contrary, the war broke out because the powers had come to realize that the revolutionary Taipings would not satisfy all their desires and that, therefore, it would be better to enter into collusion with the Qing rulers. Indeed, their purpose in starting the war was to make them more servile.

In this war the Qing rulers displayed an attitude far less active than in the war against the Taipings. In fact they did not put up any real resistance. At the first serious blow to their army, they sued for peace, making far greater concessions than ever before. In December 1857, the Anglo-French forces occupied Guangzhou. (For three years Guangzhou was under their military control.) The invaders reinstated Bai Gui, whom they had taken prisoner, as governor on condition that he loyally collaborate with the occupation army. This must have deeply impressed the Qing government. The following year (1858), the invading forces moved north, captured the Dagu Forts in May, forced their way into the Baihe River and pressed onto Tianjin within nine days. The panic-stricken Qing government lost no time in indicating its readiness to submit. In June, it signed a series of treaties with Russia, the United States, Britain and France which came to be known as the treaties of Tianjin. The treaties extended many-fold the privileges granted the foreigners by the Treaty of Nanking 16 years earlier. Thus the Anglo-American demands for the revision of treaties were basically satisfied.

In their report to the emperor, Guiliang and Huashana who signed the treaties of Tianjin for the Qing government wrote:

> The foreigners have seen through the real situation prevailing in China. They understand perfectly well our difficulties and dilemmas,

and therefore have the audacity to encroach unscrupulously upon our sovereignty.

The report added:

> The internal rebellion has not been put down and the dangers from without again loom on the horizon. In these circumstances, it is as difficult to recruit soldiers as it is to raise funds to supply the army.

The two envoys therefore considered that it was absolutely impossible to carry on the war. They wrote further:

> In view of the fact that they (the foreigners) have handed back Guangzhou and withdrawn from Dagu, it seems clear that they harbour no intention of effecting long-term occupation of Chinese territory.

So these officials regarded the foreigners, after all, as friends. They concluded:

> It is our humble opinion that the foreigners quarrelled with China because of distrust and suspicions, and that now they are deeply grateful to Your Majesty for the privileges granted them. Therefore, if we treat them in a spirit of magnanimity and prove to them our sincerity and trustworthiness and if, as a result, we establish stable friendly relations with them, then our nation may well be spared the necessity of taking up arms to repel the foreign menace; and this may serve the purpose of keeping the foreigners quiet and contented.[1]

In this report, hostility towards the people and readiness to toady with the foreign aggressors were clearly revealed.

In the eyes of the Qing government, the residence of foreign envoys in Beijing as provided by the treaties of Tianjin involved a greater loss of "face" than anything else. (In fact, the Qing government feared that permission to foreign envoys to reside in Beijing would convince the people that the emperor had bowed to the foreigners and consequently the people would despise the court all the more.) Therefore, after the Anglo-French forces had evacuated Tianjin, the Qing government made an attempt to negotiate an alteration of the treaty provision on this question. The powers, however, would not agree. In 1859, the British and French Ministers again arrived in Dagu, expressing their desire to proceed to Beijing

[1] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Xian Feng)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 27, pp. 1-2.

to effect an exchange of the ratifications of the treaties of Tianjin on behalf of their two governments. They refused to proceed to Beijing peacefully over the land route prescribed by the Qing government but ordered the fleet accompanying them to force its way into Dagu. Senggelinqin, commanding officer at the Dagu Forts, gave orders to open fire on the foreign warships. The small Anglo-French forces suffered heavy casualties and were compelled to retreat. Meanwhile, the American Minister who had also arrived in Dagu travelled to Beijing by the prescribed route. But Britain and France again declared war on China.

In 1860, the Anglo-French invading forces once again moved north and occupied Tianjin. Continuing their advance, the invaders captured Beijing, the capital. The Qing government was neither determined nor ready to wage war against the foreign aggressors. And even after the fall of the capital and the emperor's flight to Rehe, it preferred to accept the humiliating peace terms dictated by the foreign aggressors rather than divert its forces, which were then engaged in fighting the Taipings in the South, to face the foreign menace. The result was the Convention of Peking (Beijing) which confirmed the provisions of the treaties of Tianjin and imposed further onerous obligations on China.

Through the treaties of Tianjin and the Convention of Peking the aggressors acquired all they had demanded from the Qing rulers who acceded to them without much ado. This marked the birth of a new relationship. Henceforth, the Qing government stopped wavering in its policy of appeasing the foreign aggressors on the one hand, and of vigorously suppressing the people with armed force on the other. Nor did the aggressors themselves waver in their policy of plundering China endlessly with the aid of the Qing government which they continued to support and tame for the purpose. If there is any truth in the saying that "You do not really know each other until you have quarrelled," then this may apply to the development of relations between the Qing government and the foreign powers after the first and second Opium Wars.

Hitherto, the Qing rulers had refused to let foreigners extend their tentacles of trade and religion into the interior of China. Now

they gave in on this point. Hitherto, they had persisted in refusing to accept foreign envoys in Beijing. Now they gave in on this too. They had made big concessions to the foreign aggressors out of fear, trying to ward off external crises at any cost in order to concentrate their strength to suppress internal disorders. They soon discovered that, having made these concessions, they could obtain considerable support from foreigners.

It is not difficult, therefore, to understand why the foreigners, who had first lavished praise on the Taipings and proclaimed "neutrality" in the Chinese civil war, made a *volte-face* after they had defeated the Qing government once again and obtained the latter's signature to the treaties of Tianjin and the Convention of Peking. They began to heap abuse on the Taipings and actually give aid and support to the Qing government.

The change has been widely commented upon by the bourgeois writers in Britain and the United States, as well as in China. The American professor H. F. MacNair, for instance, described the situation prevailing at the time as follows: "England and France were fighting the Manchus in the North in 1860, but gradually it became clear that they would aid the Imperialists in the South."[1] The American officer W. L. Bales put it more bluntly when he said:

> After the Arrow War (the Anglo-French war against China — *H.S.*) ended in 1860 with the British and French in occupation of Peking there was a marked change in the attitude of the powers towards the rebellion. The British and French (in fact the Americans were also there — *H.S.*) came out in open support of the Imperial government.[2]

Liang Qichao[3] also saw the tenth year of the reign of Xian Feng (1860) as the watershed year in which the powers changed their attitude towards the Taiping Uprising. He wrote:

> It was in the tenth year of the reign of Xian Feng (1860) that a change took place in the attitude of Britain, France and the United States;

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[1] MacNair, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

[2] W. L. Bales, *Tso Tsungt'ang*, Kelly and Walsh, Limited, Shanghai, 1937, p. 189.

[3] A central figure of the Chinese bourgeois political reform movement of 1898. He later degenerated into a spokesman for the constitutional monarchists, supporting the reactionary rule of the landlord and comprador class.

for in that year they hinted to the court in Beijing that they were willing to provide armed forces to assist the government to suppress the rebellion.[1]

In fact, the change was plain to every one. In 1861, that is, one year after the conclusion of the Convention of Peking, a British official, Alexander Michie, again visited the Taiping capital, Nanjing. His report on this visit contained entirely different conclusions from those drawn by the British mission which had visited Nanjing in 1853. He said: "I have no hope of any good ever coming of the rebel movement. No decent Chinaman will have anything to do with it. They do nothing but burn, murder and destroy."[2]

In 1861, Anson Burlingame was appointed U.S. Minister to China. He was the first American Minister to reside in Beijing in conformity with the provisions of the Treaty of Tientsin (Tianjin). Burlingame played an important part in China's diplomatic history. Although a supporter of President Lincoln in domestic politics and enjoying some sort of reputation as an exponent of freedom and equality, he had no sooner set foot on Chinese soil than he revealed his hostile attitude towards the Taipings, who were waging a struggle for the freedom and equality of the Chinese people. Burlingame made every effort to bolster up the autocratic Qing government which was out to suppress the freedom and equality of the Chinese people. According to the American bourgeois historian, F. W. Williams, Burlingame held the opinion that "the Imperial Government should be treated not only as the *de jure* power in the land, but sustained for the sake of humanity in its desperate struggle with anarchy by whatever moral support was allowable in a diplomatic agent."[3] His proposal was approved by U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward.

Bourgeois writers ascribe the radical change in the attitude of the powers towards the Taipings to the "increasing bad conduct" of the Taipings shown in the latter period of their rule. It is true that

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[1] Liang Qichao, *Li Hongzhang* (in Chinese), p. 14.

[2] MacNair, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

[3] F. W. Williams, *Anson Burlingame and the First Chinese Mission to Foreign Powers*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1912, p. 22.

the Taiping Uprising, which was by nature a purely peasant war, was not immune from certain weaknesses; and indeed these weaknesses became more clear in the years after they had established their government at Nanjing. But some of these weaknesses had been apparent even in the early days of the Taiping rule. At that time, however, many foreigners were of the opinion that the Taipings were definitely more progressive than the Qing rulers. In fact, this contrast remained true to the last days of the Taiping rule. Did the Qing rulers, in the course of their long-drawn-out war against the Taipings, initiate any reform to do away with their conservatism, depravity, corruption and inaptitude? Definitely not. On the contrary, the Qing soldiers continued to burn, kill, destroy and pillage with ever growing ferocity as the war went on, while, in sharp contrast, the Taiping army always preserved the basic qualities that derive from a revolutionary peasant war. Therefore, such reasons do not explain why, in 1860, the foreigners changed their attitude towards the Taipings. The root cause of the change was that, having acquired far-reaching concessions from the Qing government which claimed to represent the "decent Chinese" and was hostile to the "lower orders" in revolt, the powers were quite willing to band together with these "decent Chinese." After they had brought the Qing government to its knees, the powers were only too willing to recognize it as the "legitimate government," and render it "moral support," holding that it was in conformity with "humanitarian considerations" to aid such a government to massacre the Chinese people. To enjoy the privileges granted by the treaties of Tianjin and the Convention of Peking in all parts of China and without molestation, the powers had to expedite the downfall of the Taiping Kingdom and help the Qing rulers "unify the country" at the earliest possible moment. Early in 1861, Britain and the United States opened Hankou and Jiujiang as new treaty ports. Consequently, it became an all-important task for these powers to aid the Qing government to oust the Taiping army from the lower reaches of the Changjiang River.

Anson Burlingame brought out this point even more clearly in his instructions to the American consul in Shanghai. He said:

> While we wish to give our moral support to the government, at the present time the power in the country which seems disposed to maintain order and our treaty rights, we should prefer that it organize its own defence taking only foreigners for instructing in the arts of peace and war, and these, as far as possible, from the small treaty powers.[1]

Here Burlingame clearly explained why the powers adopted a policy of bolstering up the Qing government. In order to avoid conflicts of interests between the powers, he proposed that foreign instructors should be invited "from the small treaty powers." As events later showed, it was the few "great powers" which had signed the treaties of Tianjin and the Convention of Peking that came forward to give military support to the Qing government.

Burlingame indicated in no ambiguous terms that the governments of the powers had completely cast off their policy of "neutrality." It must be added, however, that even while the powers were pretending to follow a policy of "neutrality" in the Chinese civil war, they were already collaborating with the Qing government in military matters. The only difference was that whereas previously collaboration with the Qing government was partial and unofficial, it now became an official and clear-cut policy of the powers.

What were the instances of military collaboration between the powers and the Qing government before the conclusion of the Convention of Peking?

When the Xiao Dao Hui, which rallied to the cause of the Taipings, took the city of Shanghai in 1853, Britain, France and the United States concentrated their forces in the "foreign settlement," announcing that they would remain "neutral," but that they would resist any Xiao Dao Hui attack on the settlement. But when, in 1854, the officials in Shanghai handed over the control of the customs administration to the foreigners, the foreign troops in the settlement began to participate actively in the war. The French forces were the first to go into action. They shelled the city of Shanghai which was then in the hands of the Xiao Dao Hui, and thus helped the Qing troops rapidly suppress the uprising. This was the first instance of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 34

foreign intervention to help the troops in the suppression of the Chinese people.

In 1860, the Taiping army advanced towards Shanghai, at a time when the Qing government was still in a state of war with Britain and France in the North. In Shanghai, however, the foreign troops in the settlement fully collaborated with the Qing forces in the defence of the city. It was this support, in fact, that prevented the Taiping army from capturing Shanghai. The foreign regular forces had to remain on the defensive as it was inadvisable to take the offensive against the Taiping army. Later, F. T. Ward, a rapacious American mercenary proposed to the Qing local authorities that he would enlist a number of foreign soldiers and attack Songjiang in Jiangsu Province for them. For this, he demanded a reward of thirty thousand taels of silver. The deal was closed without delay. Ward led one hundred foreign soldiers (including English sailors and Filipinos) in an attack on Songjiang; he failed, but succeeded in a second attempt. After this, operating from Songjiang as a base, he co-operated with the Qing troops in an assault on Qingpu, but suffered a serious defeat. His success at Songjiang, however, won him the confidence of the Qing officials and gentry in Shanghai. He was entrusted with enlisting Chinese recruits in Songjiang, who were trained by British and American instructors in the use of modern weapons.

In 1860, the Qing officials in Jiangsu and Zhejiang vigorously advocated the employment of foreign troops to assist the Qing forces in the campaign against the Taipings. At that time, however, the government was at war with Britain and France in the North, so they had not the audacity formally to raise the question with the powers concerned. The employment of Ward, to all appearances, was arranged by the gentry and businessmen of Shanghai. Yet it was really the official circles which pulled the strings, and the Beijing government that gave the deal its tacit approval. What was the attitude of Britain and the United States? They aided the Qing forces on the pretext that they were "protecting the Shanghai settlement." Ward's enlistment of foreign recruits for service with the Qing government clearly constituted a violation of the principle of "neu-

trality." Indeed, the British authorities protested to the American consul, charging Ward with enticing British sailors to desert. And the American consul took Ward into custody aboard an American warship on the charge that his activities ran counter to the policy of "neutrality." But Ward was soon allowed to escape by swimming ashore. He reappeared in Songjiang, training Chinese soldiers, as before, with the help of British "deserters." It is clear that although the help Ward and his associates had given the Qing government in 1860 in its war against the Taipings appeared to be the action of individuals, it was acquiesced in by the authorities concerned. It is also clear that the powers, with the treaties of Tianjin in their hands, harboured the intention of supporting the Qing government in the South in spite of their attack on Beijing in the North.

Immediately after the conclusion of the Convention of Peking, the powers cast off their masks of "neutrality" without any further ado. The French Minister went so far as formally to offer to the Qing authorities his country's help in suppressing the "rebellion." The Russian Minister also tried to get permission to send Russian troops for the same purpose, while American businessmen offered to transport tribute rice for the Chinese government. And so the Qing government began to consider seriously the question of using foreign troops.

The changes in the attitude of the powers towards the Taiping Kingdom and the Qing government before and after 1860 may be summed up as follows: To the Taipings the powers first held out a friendly hand and then showed the mailed fist, while to the Qing government they first showed the mailed fist and then held out a helping hand. The purpose of the powers in fighting the Qing rulers in 1860, and up to the capture of Beijing, was for wooing them.

5. MILITARY CO-OPERATION

In the preceding section we used the saying that "You do not really know each other until you have quarrelled" to explain the relations that prevailed between the Qing government and the powers

after the war waged against China by the Anglo-French forces. Did the Qing rulers learn anything new from the conduct of the foreign powers? Hitherto, they had been afraid that invasion by the Western powers would lead to the establishment of a new dynasty in place of the old, as had happened in Chinese history when various nationalities (including the Manchus themselves), other than the Hans, pushed into the Central Plain from beyond the northern borders. But now their minds were out at ease. The invading Anglo-French forces occupied Beijing in 1860, but evacuated it soon after the conclusion of the Convention of Peking, leaving the Qing regime unchanged. Thus in a memorial to the court in January 1861, Prince Gong (Yixin), who was responsible for China's foreign affairs, wrote:

> After the exchange of the ratification of the treaties, the foreign troops withdrew to Tianjin and sailed southward. The requests they had made were based on treaty provisions. It is clear that since they are not going to make any claim either on our territory or on our people they can yet be won over with good faith and tamed. In the meantime, we should strive to become strong and prosperous. The situation seems to be different from the one which had prevailed in the previous dynasties.

In plain words, this official jargon simply means that it was a paying proposition to make friends with the foreigners since they still had a use for the Qing regime and were not inclined to supersede it. The memorial went on to say:

> Reviewing the situation, we may say that the position we have assumed today vis-à-vis the foreign powers bears some resemblance to the attitude assumed by the Kingdom of Shu towards the Kingdom of Wu.[1] The two kingdoms were enemies, but when Zhuge Liang was at the helm of the state affairs of the Kingdom of Shu, he initiated a policy of improving relations with the Kingdom of Wu by sending an envoy to negotiate an agreement for a joint attack on the Kingdom of Wei.

To make it clearer, the memorial added:

> In so far as the present-day situation is concerned, the twin evils of the Fa (meaning the Taiping Uprising — *H.S.*) and Nian (meaning the uprising of organized peasantry in the North, rallying to the cause of

[1] Wei, Shu and Wu were three rival kingdoms, each ruling over a part of China during the period from 220 to 280. Zhuge Liang, the prime minister of the Kingdom of Shu, was an outstanding statesman and strategist.

the Taipings — *H.S.*) are mortal dangers. Russia is less dangerous . . . and Britain is even less so. Therefore, we should, first and foremost, suppress the Fa and Nian, leaving the question of Russian menace to be dealt with later, and the question of the danger from Britain, to a still later date.[1]

Clearly, the memorial, by recalling the historical episode of the alliance between the Kingdom of Shu and the Kingdom of Wu to attack Wei, meant to suggest a policy aimed at destroying the Taipings with the aid of foreign powers.

Would any "ill effects" arise from a policy of collaboration with foreign powers? Before coming to a definite conclusion, the Qing government, at the end of 1860, instructed its provincial viceroys and governors to express their opinions on this subject. The governor of Jiangsu, Xue Huan, who had collaborated with Ward, wholeheartedly supported such a policy, stressing that the assistance of foreign troops would enable the government to launch an attack on the Taipings with land and naval forces and would ensure good prospects of retaking Nanjing and dislodging the Taipings from the Changjiang Valley. The newly appointed viceroy of Liangjiang (Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Anhui), Zeng Guofan, who was responsible for directing the campaign against the Taipings, expressed fear that a victory gained with the assistance of foreign troops might give rise to complications, but, taking everything into consideration, thought that the court would do well to accept the foreigners' offer to "assist in suppressing the rebellion." He stressed that he considered the attitude of the United States the most favourable and thought it the ideal country to co-operate with. In May 1861, Prince Gong submitted a memorial asking for permission to purchase "foreign vessels and cannon." In this memorial he went so far as to say:

After establishing friendly relations with the British and French we have been at peace with them. It seems they can be induced to side with us. If we take this opportunity to reach an understanding with the foreign powers, if we unite with them to suppress the rebels, it will not be difficult gradually to wipe out the latter.[2]

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[1] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Xian Feng)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 71, p. 18.

[2] Wang Zhichun, *A Chronicle of Trade Relations with Foreign Powers* (in Chinese), Vol. 15.

In the winter of 1861, the main force of the Taiping army launched another big offensive in the lower Changjiang. Starting out from Jiangxi, the Taipings entered Zhejiang took Hangzhou and then a part of this force advanced towards Shanghai. At this juncture, the government ordered Zuo Zongtang's army to move into Zhejiang. At the same time, Li Hongzhang was ordered to organize and train an Anhui army to go to the rescue of Shanghai. But as the Anhui army, stationed at Anqing, could not get to Shanghai immediately, the British promptly came forward with a helping hand. The admiral commanding the British fleet in Chinese waters permitted British merchant vessels in the lower Changjiang to transport the 8,000-strong Anhui army from Anqing to Shanghai, then the main battlefield of the Chinese civil war. At the same time, the Qing government formally announced its decision to seek the assistance of foreign troops. The "imperial edict" of February 8, 1862, said shamelessly:

> . . . The situation in Shanghai is extremely critical. The Zongli Yamen (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) has already approached the British and French ministers in Beijing in connection with the question of using foreign troops to assist in the suppression of the rebellion. Xue Huan reports that British and French officials have contributed a great deal to our cause. In fact, French warships have bombarded the rebels. This clearly demonstrates that the two powers earnestly desire to establish cordial relations with us. It is natural that Shanghai, an important commercial centre, should be jointly defended by China and foreign powers. . . . The military situation is very critical, and if everything has to be referred to Beijing for decision by the Zongli Yamen itself, there will be too big a delay. Xue Huan is hereby authorized to negotiate with the British and French on the question of employing foreign troops to assist in the suppression of the rebellion and to promptly complete the arrangements. We would certainly not object to any decision which could contribute to the suppression of the rebels. Should the powers concerned put forward any request for rewards for their services these requests may be considered favourably, so as to promote friendly relations with them.[1]

Of course the foreign powers were overjoyed at the overtures "to promote friendly relations" of this kind. The British and French

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[1] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Tong Zhi)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 4, p. 2.

formed a joint force in the Shanghai settlement to help the Qing government in its fight against the Taipings.

The Anglo-French forces, under the command of Admiral J. Hope and General C. Staveley (Britain) and Admiral A. Protet (France) launched their first attack on the Taiping army at Gaoqiao, near Shanghai, in February 1862. The British and the French shamelessly tried to justify this act of war on the grounds that, because they had "concessions" in Shanghai, they had a right to defend areas within a radius of 30 miles around them. Thus, the Anglo-French forces came to conduct open war on Chinese soil and they massacred and plundered the Chinese people. The French Admiral Protet was killed in action in May 1862. The Anglo-French regular forces took part in the military operations against the Taipings in Zhejiang, and in May 1862, the Anglo-French fleet landed a force in Hangzhou Bay and helped the Qing troops to capture and garrison Ningbo.

The foreign aggressors changed their tactics of intervention so as to gain greater flexibility. They began to organize irregular forces, and so Ward's detachment and the French contingent formed in Zhejiang appeared on the scene.

The Civil War of 1861-65 had broken out in the United States and the American forces in China were gradually withdrawn. But the force organized, trained and led by Ward in a "private" capacity remained in China and played an ever more important role. By now this force was no longer "illegitimate." With official recognition of the Qing government and open support of the American and British governments, it took an active part in the battle against the Taipings around Shanghai. In March 1862, the Qing government brazenly issued an order honouring Ward's troops with the title of "Ever Victorious Army." In September, Ward's army was ordered to cross the Hangzhou Bay to attack the Taipings from Ningbo. Ward was mortally wounded in September in the battle for Cixi. In a special report to the State Department, American Minister Burlingame expressed his deep sorrow over Ward's death. Among other things he said: "Indeed, he taught the Chinese their strength, and laid the foundations of the only force with which their govern-

ment can hope to defeat the rebellion."[1] Ward was succeeded by another American, H. A. Burgevine. But Burgevine made a bad job of it, and was dismissed and replaced by the British officer Charles G. Gordon. In 1863, the "Ever Victorious Army," under Gordon's command, helped Li Hongzhang's Anhui army launch a counter-offensive against the Taipings and recapture Jiading, Changshu, Kunshan, Suzhou, Yixing, Liyang and Changzhou. There can be no doubt that without Gordon's help, Li Hongzhang's Anhui army would not have attained such results.

In Ningbo, French officers, following Ward's example, formed a Sino-French contingent, known as the "French Riflement." After Ward's death in the Cixi battle in September 1862, the "Ever Victorious Army" withdrew to Shanghai, while the French force remained in this area to continue military operations. Just as Ward and Gordon had greatly assisted Li Hongzhang, so the French force played a great part in the successful campaign of the Qing government troops under Zuo Zongtang in Zhejiang. At that time, the province of Zhejiang was almost fully under the Taiping control. Slowly, overcoming great difficulties, Zuo's army drove northward from the upper reaches of the Qiantang River, while the "French Riflemen," operating from Ningbo, fanned out westward and helped the Qing forces seize the east coast of Zhejiang. In March 1863, Zuo's army and the French force effected a junction in Shaoxing, which fell under their combined attack. After this, Zuo's army descended on Fuyang. For six months the Taipings valiantly defended the town, and Zuo could not take it. It was only after the French force had been diverted to this front and bombarded the city with heavy guns that the Taiping garrison was compelled to withdraw. Then in March 1864, aided by the French, Zuo's army captured Hangzhou.

The main force of the Hunan army under Zeng Guofan laid siege to Nanjing in May 1862, but it was not until July 1864 that Zeng was able to capture the city. It is questionable, however, whether Zeng could have taken Nanjing without Li Hongzhang's

[1] MacNair, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

success in the area between Nanjing and Shanghai, gained with the assistance of the "Ever Victorious Army," and without Zuo Zongtang's success in Zhejiang aided by the French force.

Naturally, we cannot ascribe the failure of the Taiping Kingdom entirely to the assistance given the Qing government by foreign powers. It was mainly due to its own weaknesses. It is an indisputable fact, however, that the foreign powers, by helping to suppress the Taipings, saved the Qing regime at a critical moment. In his biography of Li Hongzhang, written in 1901, Liang Qichao, speaking from the viewpoint of the Qing rulers, commented:

> True, the brilliant success of Li Hongzhang in putting down the rebellion in Jiangsu was due to the fact that the officers and men in the Anhui army had fought valiantly and tenaciously, but the main factor was the assistance given by Ward and Gordon. Likewise, Zuo Zongtang had been successful in recovering Zhejiang largely because he was aided by French generals like d'Aiguebelle and Giquel. Thus, the Qing Dynasty, which was practically at its last gasp, owed its survival mainly to the British and French.[1]

Commenting upon the significance of this historical episode, Captain Bales, who wrote a biography of Zuo Zongtang, pointed out:

> The earlier accounts written by foreigners have, very naturally, centred about the participation of foreigners in the suppression of the rebellion, particularly the part played by the "Ever Victorious Army" under General Gordon. An idea thus got abroad that foreigners did in effect put down the Taiping Rebellion.

Bales did not agree with this exaggerated estimation but he himself expressed the following opinion:

> Their (meaning the foreign interventionists — *H.S.*) contribution was of great value in the last stage of the conflict. They handled the Customs administration for the government, thus providing the Chinese with some of the sinews of war. They used troops and warships in the Shanghai and Ningpo zones. They loaned officers to assist in maintaining the Sino-Foreign contingents that grew out of Ward's efforts. They sold arms and supplies, and probably loaned some, to the Chinese and practically imposed an embargo on such sales to the Taipings. All this assistance, if it did not win the war, certainly hastened its close.[2]

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[1] Liang Qichao, *Li Hongzhang* (in Chinese), pp. 24-25.

[2] W. L. Bales, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-190.

This passage becomes a most fitting description of the situation if, for Bales' word "Chinese," we substitute "the Qing rulers."

What is worthy of our attention is not the relative weight of the foreign and Qing contributions to the victory over the Taiping army. The important thing is that, as a result of their common efforts for the suppression of the revolutionary movement of the Chinese people, the Qing rulers and the foreign powers established friendly relations. It has been shown that they found it possible to establish mutual trust and to collaborate in spite of their mutual suspicions, animosity and even occasional wars. This represented a new height in the relations between China and the foreign powers after the conclusion of the Treaty of Nanking.

In January 1864, Lieutenant Lyster, an Englishman residing in Shanghai, made the following remark in a letter home: "The present government is very weak and cannot last very long. If Gordon liked, he could dethrone the Emperor and start a new dynasty, if foreign powers did not intervene."[1] Clearly, this officer, though filled with arrogant imperialist ideas of superiority, was lacking in experience. The experienced colonialist aggressors had come to the conclusion that the Qing government, weakened as it was by corruption and depravity, was a government to their liking. Establishment of a "Gordon dynasty" would have encountered considerable difficulties. Drawing on the experience from the great Taiping Revolution, the powers began to realize that, in order to control China and to fleece the Chinese people, it was more desirable to preserve and support the Qing Dynasty than to see it crumble. It need cause no surprise, therefore, that, despite having fought each other in two Opium Wars in twenty years, the two sides had arrived at military collaboration to strangle the Chinese people's revolution.

As Chairman Mao put it:

> Indeed, the history of modern China is a history of imperialist aggression, of imperialist opposition to China's independence and to her development of capitalism. Earlier revolutions failed in China because

[1] MacNair, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

imperialism strangled them, and innumerable martyrs died, bitterly lamenting the non-fulfilment of their mission.[1]

Chairman Mao also said:

> The history of China's transformation into a semi-colony and colony by imperialism in collusion with Chinese feudalism is at the same time a history of struggle by the Chinese people against imperialism and its lackeys.[2]

The events from 1840-1864 illustrate the accuracy of this formulation of the main direction of the modern history of China.

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[1] Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1965, Vol. II, p. 354.

[2] Mao Zedong, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1965, Vol. II, p. 314.

Chapter II

THE MYTH OF "REGENERATION"; TOADYING TO THE FOREIGNERS (1864-1894)

1. IGNOMINIOUS "REGENERATION"

Although the Qing forces capture Nanjing, the Taiping capital, in July 1864, and thus put an end to the revolutionary order born of the peasant uprising, this in no way signified that the Qing regime had consolidated its position and succeeded in unifying the country by armed force. Not only did the remaining Taiping forces carry on their activities with unmitigated vigour, but the peasants and minority nationalities rose in armed revolt in the South, North, Northwest and Southwest, and their revolt spread like a prairie fire.

While the Qing rulers were joyfully celebrating the "Nanjing victory," the situation prevailing in China was:

1. Part of the remaining Taiping forces in Jiangsu and Zhejiang withdrew to Anhui and Jiangxi and then made their way south to Guangdong and Fujian. They were still very strong and the Qing government ordered the Hunan and Anhui armies to sup- Taiping forces was completely defeated.

2. Another part of the remaining Taiping forces north of the press them. It was not until the spring of 1866 that this part of the Changjiang River joined the Nian army, which had been formed by the peasants in revolt in Henan and Anhui. It had made its weight felt during the early period of the Taiping rule. Reinforced by the remaining Taiping forces, it gained immensely in strength, and its influence spread to eight provinces: Jiangsu, Anhui, Hubei, Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Hebei. In May 1865, the Nian forces defeated the Qing troops in a battle in Shandong in which the famous

Qing general, Prince Senggelinqin, was killed. The Qing court was greatly shaken and ordered Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang and Zuo Zongtang to suppress the Nian Uprising. By massacres and with recourse to other inhuman methods they finally succeeded in 1868.

3. The Miao people in Guizhou suffering from the oppression of the Qing officials, had rebelled as early as 1855. By 1864, only Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou Province, still remained in the hands of the Qing troops. The flame of struggle spread to the neighbouring provinces of Yunnan, Guangxi, Hunan and Sichuan. The Qing government ordered the Hunan army to put down the Miao uprising. It was not until more than one hundred thousand Miao people had been slaughtered that the Qing rulers claimed "victory" in 1872.

4. The Hui people in Yunnan began to rise in armed revolt in 1855 against the Qing officials. They carried on their struggle for more than ten years. The rebellion reached its peak by 1868 when the Huis were in occupation of more than fifty towns of the province. The massacres of the people by the Qing troops put an end to the uprising in 1873.

5. The Hui people in Shaanxi and Gansu in the Northwest rose in 1861 and 1862, rallying to the cause of the Nian army. Having defeated the Nian forces, the Qing troops launched an attack against the Huis and the job of suppressing the rebels again fell to Zuo Zongtang's army. The uprising ended in 1873. In 1877, Zuo Zongtang led an expeditionary force to Xinjiang to suppress an uprising of the Huis and other minority nationalities there.

These events prove that, after the capture of Nanjing from the Taipings, the Qing government was compelled to spend more than ten years waging a cruel civil war to suppress the people's uprisings in various parts of the country. These were only the more important uprisings, not including the many sporadic revolts which flared up during this period.

The Taiping Revolution, fully revealing the corruption and incompetence of the Qing ruling machine, had shaken its rule to the very foundation. The Qing rulers were in a state of great consterna-

tion and some of the foreigners sensed the gravity of the crisis. Foreign officers who had helped them in their fight against the Taipings, like Lieutenant Lyster, were inclined to believe that the Qing government was on the verge of collapse. But in spite of the strain and stress of the time, it managed to survive. Not only did it suppress the Taiping Uprising but, in the course of ten years of civil war, put down the other uprisings in various parts of the country.

For a number of years after 1864, the Qing rulers themselves were convinced that they had tided over their difficulties and entered a period of "regeneration." There were two reasons for this belief. In the first place, the main forces of the people who had rebelled against the Qing rule were made up of the oppressed peasants alone. The Taiping Uprising represented the highest achievement that a purely peasant war in a feudal era could possibly attain. But, during their rule, the Taipings revealed their own weaknesses, which made it impossible for them to establish a stable government and in the end the uprising failed. The other peasant uprisings and rebellions of the minority nationalities were on a considerably smaller scale as regards both political and military organization. Therefore, they could not start a people's revolution on a nation-wide scale to overthrow the Qing rule.

In the second place, the tottering Qing regime had secured two favourable conditions which contributed to its survival. They were:

(1) The campaign against the Taipings brought the Qing court and the Han landlords closer together, with the latter vigorously supporting the former. For two hundred years, the Qing rulers, as a non-Han minority nationality from Northeastern China holding the reins of state, had virtually merged with the Han landlords, although up to the Taiping Uprising, the Qing court had kept a watchful and suspicious eye on the upper stratum of the Han landlord class, hesitating to entrust its representatives with political and military power. When the war against the Taipings broke out, the "Eight Banner" garrisons, the mainstay of the Qing forces, proved completely devoid of fighting ability as did the "Green Banner" garrisons, recruited from among the Han people. The Qing rulers, therefore, had no alternative but to rely completely upon the Hunan and Anhui armies

under Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang and Li Hongzhang, formed along the lines of the customary provincial landlords' armed forces. They promoted Zeng, Zuo and Li to high offices and bestowed aristocratic titles upon them in recognition of their "meritorious" services. This was the first time they had conferred such honours on men of Han origin. Seeing that the Qing rulers had made such far-reaching concessions, the landlords and gentry represented by Zeng, Zuo and Li were ready to give their all to the Qing Dynasty.

At the time, some foreigners wondered "why such men as Zeng Guofan supported an alien and tottering throne, or, why, with the power in his hands, he did not throw the Manchus out and set up a Han dynasty."[1] It is not difficult to understand the reasons. The tidal wave of the peasant uprising struck not only at the Qing rule but also at the interests of the landlord class as a whole. Consequently, landlords of Han nationality, having secured more concessions from the Qing rulers and risen to real political power, thought it better to help them suppress the peasant uprisings than take the risk of setting up a new dynasty. A comparison with the events of the latter period of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) may throw further light on this question. Then the Mongolians ruled China, and there were also mass peasant uprisings. But these rulers from first to last barred the landlords and gentry of Han nationality from political power. To find a way out, therefore, a section of the Han landlord class joined with the peasants and made use of their forces to overthrow the Yuan rule and set up a new dynasty to serve the interests of the landlord class. Thus, in rallying the entire Han landlord power under their banner to weather the internal crisis, the Qing rulers proved themselves crafty and adroit.

(2) After the Taiping Uprising the foreign aggressors who had helped the Qing government to suppress the people did not deviate from their policy of bolstering up the regime. This was another condition favourable to its survival. If the landlords' troops under Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang and Li Hongzhang had not collaborated with foreigners during the war against the Taipings,

[1] W. L. Bales, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

thus obtaining a considerable quantity of modern arms as well as the assistance of a number of foreign officers, they would have found it impossible to win the subsequent civil war and put down the people's uprising in the following ten years. They secured the services of a British officer named Captain Coney in fighting the Nian forces in Shandong. And they crushed the Hui uprising in Yunnan with the help of the French. The Qing authorities invited a French merchant, Jean Dupuis, to Yunnan to help them buy arms from abroad. Consequently he was allowed to transport arms and ammunition to Yunnan from Vietnam by way of the Red River. By this arrangement, the French were enabled to explore the waterways connecting Yunnan and Indo-China while the Qing authorities got the arms they needed for suppressing the people's uprisings.

Here it is necessary to point out that many writers on the modern history of China have, consciously or unconsciously, presented events in a wrong light. They describe the imperialists' policy of aggression against China in such simple terms as to make it appear that the Qing government was little less than a wretched victim, continually at the mercy of, and humiliated by, the imperialist powers. This description contradicts historical facts. Even among works which strive to get rid of the traditional conception of history, many are influenced by purely national sentiments and therefore contain the same mistakes. As shown in the preceding chapter, during the twenty years after 1840, the rulers of China and the Chinese people had adopted different attitudes towards the foreign aggressors. It would be wrong to regard the China of that period, particularly after the cruel and fierce civil war between the Qing forces and the Taipings, as an indivisible whole under the rule of the Qing government. There was the China under the Qing rule with the support of the landlord class; there was also the China of the peasants, where armed revolts succeeded one another. The imperialists continued to commit acts of aggression against China, while clinging to the policy of bolstering up the Qing regime and helping it to oppress the people. There was nothing surprising in this. As already shown, this policy came into being in the latter period of the Taiping

Uprising and was consistently carried out in the ten years that followed.

On this point, the American bourgeois writer K. S. Latourette drew the conclusion that flows inescapably from the facts. In dealing with China's foreign relations in 1860-1893 (between the Second Opium War and the Sino-Japanese War), he wrote:

> The life of the Ch'ing dynasty was prolonged not only by the opportune suppression of internal rebellion, but also by the absence of crisis in the Empire's relations with Occidental powers so grave as those of 1839-1842 and 1856-1860. While not entirely satisfactory to Westerners, the treaties which came as the result of these wars at least promised the removal of most of the chief complaints which the aliens had against their former status in China. . . . The Westerner, too, was still aggressive. He often wished greater privileges than those already his and on more than one occasion encroached on the territory of the Empire. However, for several years after 1860 Western Powers, and especially Great Britain and the United States, conducted their relations with China on the basis of the belief that their interests would be best served by supporting the dignity and authority of the Imperial government to strengthen it in the suppression of internal disorder.[1]

The American bourgeois writers, Owen and Eleanor Lattimore, likewise pointed out:

> At the time of the Opium War (this, in broad terms, refers to the period from 1840 to 1860 — *H.S.*), the Manchu dynasty was already in marked decay. The Opium War gravely injured the prestige of the Manchus, and their dynasty would have fallen within a decade or two, had it not been for the fact that the foreigners themselves, after defeating the Manchus, had an interest in maintaining the dynasty in order to dictate, through the Manchu court, the kind of government that suited their own interests.[2]

It is not difficult to see that the Qing government faced its gravest crisis in 1860 when the court fled to Rehe. At that juncture, the Anglo-French invading forces had entered Beijing in the north; the Taiping army had just gained a new victory in the south; and Zeng Guofan's Hunan army was at its strongest. There was a strong likelihood that any one of these three forces might put an end to

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[1] K. S. Latourette, *The Chinese, Their History and Culture,* Third Edition. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1947, p. 364.

[2] Owen and Eleanor Lattimore, *The Making of Modern China, A Short History,* George and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1945, p. 119.

the Qing Dynasty. But the crisis of 1860 passed, because the forces of the Chinese landlords represented by Zeng Guofan still felt that it was in their best interests to support the Qing rule, and because the foreign aggressors thought so too. By bowing to these two forces, the Qing rulers were able to defeat the Taiping Uprising as well as the various people's uprising which broke out after it. It is necessary, however, to remember that the root cause of the failure of these people's uprisings lay in the weaknesses attending a purely peasant war. Later, when the might of the people's revolution grew stronger, the Qing rulers could do nothing about it, even with the support of the Chinese landlords and the aid of the imperialist powers. The regime dragged on for another 46 years after 1864, but it could not rule eternally as it wished.

After the defeat of the Taiping Uprising, there was the "regeneration during the reign of Tong Zhi." It was in this period (1862-1874) that the great uprisings of the people collapsed one after another and peace was maintained with foreign powers following the conclusion of the treaties of Tianjin and the Convention of Peking. The bureaucratic landlords, speaking from the ruling class viewpoint, had the effrontery to acclaim this as "regeneration." For instance, in 1875, Chen Tao was loud in his praise of the achievements made at this time. He wrote: "The rebellions have been suppressed and peace has been established in the border regions — a magnificent achievement, unprecedented in the annals of history."[1] What a wretched and shameful claim! The boast that "peace has been established in the border regions" really meant that the Qing rulers had submitted to the foreign aggressors. That "the rebellions have been suppressed" meant the suppression of the people with foreign assistance. Actually, towards the end of the reign of Tong Zhi and the beginning of the reign of Guang Xu (1875-1908), diplomatic entanglements gradually became more acute and the myth of "regeneration" exploded. Yet, in 1879, Wang Zhichun, who visited Japan on the instructions of Shen Baozhen, Commis-

[1] Chen Tao, *Selections of Memorials Submitted by Provincial Officials Concerning the Regeneration During the Reign of Tong Zhi* (in Chinese), Preface.

sioner of Southern China Trade, was still trumpeting the magnificence of the Qing achievements. He said:

> This dynasty, with all its immense prestige and vast power, commands the respect of the whole world. Rallying around it, all nations pay tribute to the court, and foreign emissaries including those coming from the remotest countries visit the capital one after another. Willed by Providence, the exploits of this dynasty are indeed awe inspiring, and nothing of what had been achieved by military expansion by Emperor Shi Huang of the Qin Dynasty and Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty can compare with it.[1]

To what lengths the ruling classes went to fool themselves and others!

2. IMPERIALIST POLITICAL CONTROL

In fact, even in the period of the "regeneration during the reign of Tong Zhi" imperialism continued to extend its control over the Qing government. Mention should first be made of the imperialist control over the Chinese customs service.

The foreigners had taken over the customs at Shanghai from the Qing officials as early as 1854. At that time, a board of foreign inspectors composed of an Englishman, an American and a Frenchman, nominated by their respective consuls was set up to control the Shanghai customs, with the British Thomas F. Wade at the head. A year later, Wade was succeeded by another Englishman, H. N. Lay. Until the conclusion of the treaties of Tianjin in 1858, foreign control of the Chinese customs was confined to Shanghai only. After the treaties of Tianjin, the Qing government and Britain signed an "Agreement Containing Rules of Trade," Rule 10 of which read:

> One uniform system shall be enforced at every port. The High Officer appointed by the Chinese government to superintend foreign trade . . . will be at liberty, of his own choice and independently of the suggestion or nomination of any (British) authority to select any (British) subject he may see fit to aid him in the administration of the Customs revenue.

[1] Wang Zhichun. *A Report on Japan* (in Chinese), Preface, p. 8.

This article was couched in very ambiguous terms. The provision "One uniform system shall be enforced at every port" was taken by foreigners to mean that the system applied to the Shanghai customs must be extended to other ports and that foreigners must be appointed "to aid ... in the administration of the Customs revenue." This interpretation was in fact accepted by the Qing authorities. In 1859, Lay who had served as Commissioner of Customs at Shanghai was appointed Inspector General of Customs by the viceroy of Liangjiang. (Later, the appointments were made by the Zongli Yamen which was established by the Qing government in 1861.) In 1863, Lay was dismissed and replaced by Robert Hart.

Hart was a very important figure in the history of imperialist aggression against China. While serving as an interpreter with the British Consulate in Guangzhou before 1858, he ingratiated himself with high Qing officials in Guangdong. Later while Lay was on a short leave of absence, he became Acting Inspector General and concurrently Commissioner of Customs at Shanghai, further winning the confidence of the Qing government. When only 29, he was appointed Inspector General of Customs and held the post for 45 years. He relinquished his post and returned home only in 1909.

It was Hart who had devised and put into effect the whole system of foreign imperialist control over the customs administration of China. Under this system, the Inspector General was responsible to the central government of China, and at each port there was a foreign commissioner under whom there were deputy commissioners, assistants, clerks, etc. Higher offices were all filled by foreigners. True, in every port there was a superintendent of customs appointed by the Qing government and, in theory, the foreign commissioner was subordinated to the superintendent. In practice, however, the foreign commissioner was responsible only to the Inspector General who in turn was responsible to the Zongli Yamen. In 1864, this colonial customs system was put into effect at 12 ports along the China coast (including two on Taiwan) and at Jiujiang and Hankou on the Changjiang River.

The power of the Inspector General and other foreign customs officials was further extended after the Sino-Japanese War in 1894.

About this we need not go into detail here. In so far as the situation prior to the Sino-Japanese War was concerned, it was clear that the establishment of such a system not only provided great facilities for the imperialists to develop trade in China and to launch economic aggression, but also brought vital political implications in its wake.

After the foreigners took control of the customs administration, the usual practice of annually transmitting the collected revenue to the Qing Treasury was continued. Therefore, the Qing government was quite satisfied with the way the system worked, and considered that the foreign commissioners of customs were rendering it a valuable service. As a result of the war against the Taiping Uprising the Qing government was in financial straits; it had had to pay a vast amount as indemnity under the treaties of Tianjin and the Convention of Peking; and the cost of the civil war mounted every year. Its revenue was daily diminishing. The receipts of the land tax and salt tax, the principal source of revenue for the central government, had decreased sharply in consequence of the ravages of war. This made customs revenue all the more important.

The significance of the control of the Chinese customs by the imperialists lay in the fact that they used part of the spoils from the exploitation of the Chinese people to support the Qing regime which they hoped would serve as an instrument to keep the people down. Such control enabled the imperialists to suck the blood of the Chinese people by means of unequal exchange.

In controlling the customs service, the Inspector General was actually in a position to control the economic life-lines of the Qing government. And through the administration of the customs, the imperialists were able to step up their domination over Chinese politics. In fact, the actual operation of the customs system clearly revealed how the imperialists managed to tighten their grip on the Qing government and intensify their aggression against China.

In 1865, the Inspectorate General of Customs moved from Shanghai to Beijing. From then on, Robert Hart spent most of his time in the capital, which gave him an opportunity to maintain direct contact with his superior body, the Zongli Yamen. The commissioners of customs at the ports also had ample opportunity to estab-

lish direct contact with the local authorities. Everywhere, the foreign staff of the customs played a double role. On the one hand, they were foreigners and had the backing of imperialist forces, and, on the other, they were employees of the Qing government. The favourable position in which they found themselves enabled them to strike awe into the hearts of the Qing officials and at the same time to win the latter's confidence. For this reason they had a far better opportunity than foreign diplomats to meddle in and control China's politics.

H. B. Morse wrote:

> In all international questions, from negotiating a treaty to settling a land dispute, the Tsungli Yamen in those days of inexperience had constant resort to the advice and help of the Inspector General in Peking, and viceroys, governors and taotais constantly consulted and acted in conformity with the advice of the commissioners at the ports. . . . The foreign envoys had always supported its (the customs' — *H.S.*) authority. . . . From a position of much distrust Sir Robert Hart and the service under him had won, by their efficiency and trust-worthiness, the confidence of Chinese and foreigner.[1]

While paying such tribute to the customs foreign staff from an imperialist point of view, Morse throws light on the fact that, by controlling the Chinese customs, the imperialists were in a position to influence Chinese politics through the medium of the customs foreign staff.

Residing in Beijing in his capacity of Inspector General, Hart actually became the top adviser to the Zongli Yamen. He had a hand in almost every important diplomatic activity. Take a few outstanding examples. When Hart went on leave to Britain in 1866, the Qing government, acting on his advice, sent an official and a few students with him. This was the first mission the Qing government had ever sent abroad. It was also on Hart's advice that, in 1868, the Qing government appointed an American, Anson Burlingame, as an envoy to visit various foreign countries. At the Chefoo (Yantai) Conference in 1876, at which the Sino-British Chefoo Convention was signed, Hart and G. Detring, Commissioner of Customs at Tianjin, served as assistants to Li Hongzhang, the Qing plenipotentiary,

[1] Morse, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 390.

who negotiated with the British. After the Sino-French War of 1884, Hart played an important role in the conclusion of the peace treaty between China and France. While the war was still going on, Hart sent a customs official named J. D. Campbell to Paris to approach the French government. The Qing government through Hart appointed Campbell its special representative and authorized him to draw up a draft peace treaty with France. Prior to this the same Campbell had already been in London as a commissioner of Chinese customs — China then had no legations abroad. When Guo Songtao, the first envoy sent abroad by the Qing government in 1876, arrived in London he lost no time in seeking Campbell's advice and help.[1] The conclusion of the Sino-French peace treaty was clear evidence of Campbell's meddling in China's politics.

These few examples are sufficient to explain the part Hart and his subordinate customs officials played in China's politics. Hart's influence, however, was far greater than the above examples indicate. Sometimes he even had a say in the domestic affairs of China. In 1867, according to Morse, he advised the appointment of certain people known to him to the posts of viceroys of Yunnan and Guizhou and of Sichuan although at the time there was no foreign trade to speak of at all in those areas. These people were soon gazetted by the Qing government.[2]

Already at that time, some persons saw the invidiousness of Hart's political influence. Chen Zhi,[3] in his book *Concerning practical Matters,* written about 1890, said of him:

> The annual customs revenues and *likin* amounting to 30 million taels of silver are in the hands of this man. He employs hundreds of his followers in the customs and their salaries cost the country two million taels of silver a year. His counsels prevail at the court and he has gradually gained control over the conduct of the country's foreign policy. Woe to those who dare defy his authority! His vast fortune may be compared with the wealth of a nation. . . . He has obstructed the enforcement of customs tariff regulations and has shown partiality to foreign mer-

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1 Guo Songtao, *My Mission to the West* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 28.

2 See Morse, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 398 foot note.

3 A representative of the landed gentry who leaned towards the bourgeoisie.

> chants. . . . He looks sincere but in reality is a blackguard. . . . He has been knighted by the British Crown, and this is an eloquent proof that he is working for the good of his own country.

Chen Zhi dared not call Hart by name, but it was all too obvious whom he meant. The statement that "his counsels prevail at the court and he has gradually gained control over the conduct of the country's foreign policy" clearly bespeaks the power and influence that Hart wielded in the political life of China.

But how did the Qing court treat Hart? In the words of Chen Zhi, "The court has shown him confidence for many years without displaying the slightest sign of doubt or suspicion, and the high officials, whether in the central government or in the provinces, all respect and trust him."[1]

At the end of 1867, Li Hongzhang, Viceroy of Hunan and Hubei, said:

> It has been established that in dealing with foreign powers the most undesirable thing is ignorance and misunderstanding. We established diplomatic relations with the foreign powers many years ago. Just as the foreign powers know pretty well the situation in our country, so do we know something about the situation in foreign countries. . . . We know that Robert Hart is malicious at heart, yet, driven by lust for money, he is quite willing to serve us. The American envoy, Anson Burlingame, while on a mission to foreign countries on behalf of China, is said to have striven to put things right for China whenever foreign powers tried to do injustice to our country. These people can be employed to serve as intermediaries in our dealings with foreign powers.[2]

It is clear therefore that Hart had won the confidence of the responsible Qing officials.

Of the other foreigners who, Li Hongzhang said, "can be employed to serve as intermediaries in our dealings with foreign powers," there was the American Minister to China, Anson Burlingame, the first foreign envoy to reside in Beijing (Chapter I, Section 4). This man, immediately upon his arrival in China, championed the idea of helping the Qing government suppress the Taiping Upris-

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[1] Chen Zhi, *Concerning Practical Matters* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 14.

[2] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations* (*During the Reign of Tong Zhi*), Vol. 55, pp. 7-8.

ing. The powers acquired the right to send envoys to Beijing as a result of the treaties of Tianjin and the Convention of Peking. In 1861, the United States, Russia, Britain and France established legations in the capital. The Zongli Yamen was established in the same year. Previously, there had been no such ministry in the Qing central government, which had hitherto entrusted the handling of foreign affairs to the viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi. The long-cherished aspirations of foreign powers for direct contact with the Qing central government were thus fulfilled and from then on Anson Burlingame and the British envoys F. W. A. Bruce and R. Alcock all exerted considerable influence on Qing politics.

On their arrival in Beijing, the foreign envoys raised two questions with the Qing government: the establishment of Chinese legations in foreign countries and the presentation of foreign envoys to the Chinese emperor. At first the Qing government stubbornly refused to consider them. But Hart and the British and American envoys used their influence and it reluctantly conceded the first request. In 1866, as we have already seen, a Qing official went to Britain together with Hart, but not in the capacity of an official diplomatic representative. In 1868, the Qing government sent an official mission to foreign countries but this was a ludicrous affair, composed of foreigners, and foreign diplomats in China at that. The mission was headed by the American Minister Anson Burlingame who, during his stay in Beijing, had won the deep gratitude of the Qing official circles for consistently advocating foreign support for their cause. So in 1868, when Burlingame was due to relinquish his post and return to his country, the Zongli Yamen, acting on Hart's advice, appointed him "Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary" to visit Europe and the United States. To allay British and French jealousy, the Qing government also invited an interpreter of the British Legation, J. McLeavy Brown, and a Frenchman, E. de Champs, to assist Burlingame. This strange mission first visited the United States, then went to Britain and various countries in Europe and finally got to Russia where Burlingame fell ill and died and the farce came to an end.

As a result of an incident in Tianjin involving French missionaries, the Qing government was compelled to apologize to the French government, and in 1871, Chonghou was sent to France as a special envoy. In 1876, as a result of the Margary Incident, Guo Songtao was sent to Britain to apologize to the British government on behalf of the Qing government. After this, Guo was appointed Minister to Britain. In the following three years, Chinese legations were established in the United States, France and Russia. It is worth noting here that the first diplomatic representative sent abroad by the Qing government were agents of imperialist powers in China, and the first Chinese envoys appointed were sent abroad under coercion to apologize to the imperialist powers.

The question of granting audiences with the Chinese emperor to foreign envoys was settled in 1873, although the Qing authorities had tried to put every obstacle in its way. Present at the first audience were Ministers of Britain, the United States, France, Russia and Holland as well as the Japanese ambassador. (It was in the fifth year of the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) that Taneomi Soejima, with the rank of ambassador, arrived in Beijing to present his credentials. By that time Japan had already begun its aggression against China.) Bowing five times to the Qing emperor, the envoys were quite satisfied with their "success," for the Qing officials had at long last given up their demand that every foreigner kowtow to the Chinese emperor.

The exchange of diplomatic representatives between the Qing government and the foreign powers and the question of audiences with the Qing emperor were, as we see it now, not important in themselves. At the time, however, both the powers and the Qing authorities attached great significance to these two problems, for their settlement indicated that the Qing rulers had gradually submitted to the imperialist-dominated world order and that the imperialists had established control over the Qing government. The foreign envoys had tried hard to get the Qing government to agree to their residing in Beijing not because they wished to secure better facilities for carrying out their missions in the capital as ordinary diplomatic representatives but to become masters of China. They had insisted

on the right to be received in audience by the Chinese emperor in accordance with their own rules of etiquette because they intended to consolidate their position in Beijing. They had pressed the Qing government to establish legations abroad out of a desire to use these channels to bring their influence to bear on the Qing ruling circles.

The political efforts of the imperialist powers in this respect brought notable results. If the Qing officials, the scholars and the gentry felt intolerably humiliated by the Convention of Peking, concluded under the pressure of the invading Anglo-French forces in 1860, they now became reconciled to the situation confronting them. Prior to the signing of the treaties of Tianjin with Britain, the United States, tsarist Russia and France in 1858, the Qing government had concluded treaties of commerce with Sweden and Norway in 1847. After 1860, it concluded treaties with the following countries: Prussia in 1861, Portugal in 1862, Denmark and Holland in 1863, Spain in 1864, Belgium in 1865, Italy in 1866, Austria-Hungary in 1869, Japan in 1871 and Peru in 1874. These countries, strong and weak, followed the precedents set by Britain, France, the United States and Russia, and compelled the Qing government to grant them extra-territorial rights and to include in the new treaties the unilateral most-favoured-nation clause.

The Qing officials were now quite satisfied with the existing situation. Zeng Guofan, the man regarded as having done the most for the "regeneration during the reign of Tong Zhi," remarked in 1870:

> The foreign powers have remained strong and prosperous since the emperor's accession to the throne (in 1862 — *H.S.*). Only by strictly observing the terms of the peace treaties, without attempting to alter them, has China been able to maintain peaceful relations with foreign powers during the past ten years. This policy has yielded good results. . . . Henceforth, we must be ready as before to accommodate the foreign powers. If circumstances compel us to take up any defensive measures, we should do so with a view to maintaining the existing peace.[1]

Guo Songtao, the first Chinese minister abroad, repeated in the diary of his mission in 1876 that the Western powers were faithful

[1] Zeng Guofan, *Memorials* (in Chinese), Vol. 35, p. 41.

and trustworthy and China therefore should maintain friendly relations with them. He wrote:

> In exploiting colonies overseas, the Western powers have no other purpose than to make easy profits, so all they have to do is to use their wit. They have brought vast overseas territories under their sway without attempting to overthrow the regimes there or subjugate these nations. None has resorted to arms as the only means to achieve this aim. This situation has no precedent in history.

Turning to the subject of China's foreign relations, Guo expressed his opinion as follows:

> In recent years, the great powers (Britain, France, Russia, the United States and Germany), engaged in a struggle for power, have formulated international law which sets faithfulness and sincerity as the principal rule of international conduct. Special importance is attached to the maintenance of friendly relations between states. While pursuing practical interests they do not neglect the rules of etiquette. Even the relations between the states of the Spring and Autumn Period[1] probably could not compare with the relations of the modern nations. Britain and Russia are two great powers. . . . Yet they harbour no intentions of plundering other people by resorting to armed force. They took up arms against China only after they had exhausted every peaceful possibility. . . . In the present world situation, there is no other way for a nation to maintain its independence except by doing all it can to treat foreign powers with sincerity.[2]

Many contemporary scholars and representatives of the gentry condemned Guo Songtao as a traitor, although they judged him from the ultra-conservative point of view of opposition to all new things. In fact, however, even if Guo Songtao showed himself a little different from the die-hards, it was simply because he quickly assimilated the imperialist political outlook, and considered that under the Qing rule China could survive as a nation only if it followed and respected the imperialist world order (i.e. international law), and therefore it could do nothing but show utmost patience and forbearance towards insults and treat aggressors "with sincerity."

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[1] In Chinese history, the period from 770 to 475 B.C. is known as the Spring and Autumn Period.

[2] Guo Songtao, *My Mission to the West* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 19, Vol. 2, p. 3, pp. 24-25.

3. "TUTOR" AND "PUPIL"

In spite of all their gains, the foreign aggressors were not completely satisfied with the Qing government.

The procrastination and equivocation of the Qing government in dealing with the questions of imperial audiences to foreign envoys, the establishment of Chinese legations abroad and the revision of treaties, together with many other issues, left the foreign powers much dissatisfied with the government they were supporting.

A. B. Freeman-Mitford, an attaché in the British Legation in Beijing in 1865-1866, gives a clear idea of the reasons for the complaints of the foreign envoys in his published letters written during his stay in Beijing. Describing a meeting held in April 1866 between British Minister Alcock and Prince Gong, who had headed the Zongli Yamen ever since its establishment, Freeman-Mitford wrote:

> Railroads, telegraphs, violation of treaties, etc., all stories that have been trotted out a hundred times. The Prince of Kung was very nervous and fidgety. He twisted, doubled and dodged like a hare.

The points enumerated here by Freeman-Mitford were exactly those about which the British and other foreign envoys had made constant complaints.

In another letter, Freeman-Mitford wrote:

> It is really provoking, after all the pains that have been taken to induce this wretched Government to save itself, which it could easily do by the most ordinary exertion, to see half a dozen archers outside the gates making such practice at a target twenty yards off as any girl of eighteen, member of a toxophilite club at home, would be ashamed of. Yet this is the stuff which the Chinese Government are content to accept as the means of putting down the insurrection. The troops that they are drilling in the European fashion are merely a sop to foreign representatives, and not the evidence of earnest wishes to improve.

Referring to the employment of foreign officers to train the Qing army, he said:

> There is a class of superior officers who consider it beneath their dignity to serve under foreign officers. The obstacles which such men throw in the way of the latter, together with the uncertainty of being able to obtain supplies and pay for the troops under their command, render their position intolerable, as Colonel Gordon found on more than one occasion. The English officers who have been lent to instruct the Im-

perialists have found their way in many instances anything but smooth, and have had great difficulty in carrying out the measures which they deemed necessary. Under these circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that the rebels, whose ranks are swelled by the local banditti, secret societies, and Imperialist soldiers mutinous for want of pay, should still show a head.

Speaking of repeated "violations" of treaties by the Qing government, Freeman-Mitford said:

> So the treaties continue to be broken, and the existence of the present dynasty in China hangs upon the patience of foreign governments, who have too great a stake in the country to sink the ship so long as there is a hope of her floating.[1]

The powers which were carrying out an aggressive policy against China made every effort to keep the ramshackle ship of the Qing regime afloat for their own purposes. By using such a simile, this junior diplomat gave a rather vivid description of the policies adopted by foreign powers vis-à-vis the Qing government.

What motivated the foreign powers to press the Qing government to build railways and telegraphs, to reform the army and to "keep faith" in international relations?

Let us first deal with the question of railways and telegraphs. It is clear that the powers showed such enthusiasm in this matter because railways and telegraphs could facilitate their aggression and extend their influence to the interior of China. In the sphere of foreign trade, notwithstanding the treaties of Tianjin which had immeasurably facilitated the foreign powers' economic aggression against China, the total volume of imports and exports grew very slowly — the increase between 1865 and 1885 being only 25 per cent. This fact alone made the aggressors very anxious to extend railways to the interior of China so as to expand the market for their commodities. Although ready to make every possible concession to foreign powers, the Qing government, rotten to the core, was extremely afraid of any such innovations. It had no stomach for new things such as railways and telegraphs and so tried to avoid them as long as possible. In 1876, some British merchants took it

[1] A. B. Freeman-Mitford, *The Attaché at Peking*, Macmillan and Co., London, 1900, pp. 83-85, pp. 240-241.

upon themselves to build a light railway between Shanghai and Wusong. The Qing government later redeemed the railway, only to demolish it. The cowardice and conservatism shown by the Qing government in this respect aroused the "anger" of the foreign aggressors.

Next comes the question of the "violation" of treaties. The foreign powers were continuously harping on China's failure to keep faith in international relations. The real reason for this was to compel China to observe the unequal treaties which they had forced down its throat. Needless to say, these treaties were nothing but a set of rules to tie China hand and foot. Although the powers invariably used them to justify their claims, they never let these same treaties limit their own actions in China.

The establishment of foreign settlements in Shanghai and other treaty ports, the introduction of the customs system and the special protection given to Chinese converts to Christianity by the missionaries in the interior — all these went far beyond the scope of the original treaties. The aggressors did as they liked in China and forced the Qing government to recognize each of their actions as a *fait accompli*. If the Qing government showed any signs of oscillation, it was immediately charged with violation of treaties and threatened with the loss of its "independence." The implication was: If you refuse to recognize what we do, don't complain when we take stern measures to strip you of what is left of the nominal independence that you are now enjoying.

The Qing government had made one concession after another to the foreign powers, signed a series of humiliating treaties and recognized each and every extra-treaty encroachment as a *fait accompli*. It could therefore not be expected to deliberately tear up the treaties to extricate itself from the one-sided obligations imposed by them. In fact, the Qing government tried hard all along to please its foreign masters, though it had its own difficulties. The entire ruling machine from the capital down to the provinces was stricken with paralysis, the central government being powerless to control the local authorities. Moreover, in the face of the recurring uprisings of the people, the Qing government often did not dare to make

the treaties concluded with foreign powers public. It was, moreover, incapable of curbing the people's spontaneous resistance to such treaties because it feared that this would arouse an even stronger popular reaction. "Hoodwink superiors and subordinates alike": this was characteristic of bureaucratic politics. The Qing government tried both to fool the people it ruled and to pull wool over the eyes of its foreign masters. The foreign masters, on their part, were extremely dissatisfied with the powerlessness of the Qing government to suppress the people's anti-foreign activities. Hence the charge of "lack of sincerity in fulfilling treaty obligations."

The complaints made by the aggressors about the military organization of the Qing government, mentioned in Freeman-Mitford's letters, showed clearly that the aggressors were impatient with its utter inability to suppress the people and establish a stable order. They persistently demanded "reforms" with the sole purpose of impelling it to strengthen its position internally and carry out more faithfully the tasks entrusted to it by the powers.

Freeman-Mitford's letters leave no room for doubt that the interests of the aggressors in China were closely tied to the existence of the Qing government. Foreign government, as he put it, had "too great a stake in the country to sink the ship so long as there is a hope of her floating." For this reason they took great pains to instruct and support the government.

Who can deny that the foreign aggressors acted as tireless "tutors" to this feudal autocratic government which was engaged in oppressing the Chinese people? They had not only helped it suppress the Taiping Uprising but, on more than one occasion, supplied Chinese generals with modern rifles and guns — by way of trial.

Freeman-Mitford, in his letters, tells a story about a telegraph. In November 1865, he relates the Russian government sought to set up a telegraph line from Kiakhta to Beijing and sent an engineer to Beijing with a complete apparatus, which was demonstrated at the Russian Legation to Chinese officials. The Russian Minister, M. Vlangaly, offered to have a few Chinese trained in the use of the

machine, as an enticement to get the Chinese officials to accept it more willingly.

Some four years before this, Prince Gong had refused the telegraph apparatus offered him by the French envoy, Baron Gros. But now, as Freeman-Mitford said, the government was "more ripe for taking impressions from abroad." To mark the importance attached to the occasion, Prince Gong went along with Zongli Yamen officials to the Russian Legation to see the telegraph apparatus in operation. Although nothing came of the scheme in the end, this "victory" won by the Russians made the French extremely jealous.

In this period, Thomas Wade, an Englishman, translated a British infantry manual into Chinese. Relating how the British Legation staff were invited to see a parade of Chinese troops, Freeman-Mitford writes of this spectacle:

> There were about two thousand soldiers, and they were to exercise, not with the swords, and bows, and shields of "the Braves," but according to our drill book, which Wade has translated for them.

W. A. P. Martin, an American missionary, made a Chinese translation of Wheaton's *International Law*. The work was published in 1864 under the auspices of the Zongli Yamen. Referring to this episode, Freeman-Mitford acclaimed it as "an event of importance in the history of China."[1] Needless to say, the work was considered important because it taught Chinese officials to act in accordance with the rules set for a semi-colony.

In 1866, the Inspector General of Customs, Robert Hart, submitted to the Zongli Yamen a memorandum which may well be regarded as a textbook written for the Qing government on behalf of the foreign envoys in China. In this document, Hart drew the Qing government's attention to the internal and external difficulties confronting them and frankly told them that the only way out was to follow the instructions of foreign powers in all issues. He wrote that the treaties provided what must be done and what ought not to be done. Treaties entered into by nations, he said in a threatening tone, were in no sense different from contracts entered into by individuals.

[1] Freeman-Mitford, *op. cit.*, p. 65, p. 77, p. 86.

If an individual violated a contract he was liable to be sued. In the same way, when a nation broke a treaty entered into with another nation, international law sanctioned the use of armed force by the complaining party as a means of redress. In the event of a war, the vanquished must recognize the validity of the old treaty and pay indemnities to the victor and provide additional guarantees for the implementation of the obligations so undertaken. Breaches of treaties, Hart added, were apt to bring about war, with all its disastrous consequences. In the case of treaty violation, the guilty party either lacked the willingness or the ability to honour its obligations. If a breach stemmed from unwillingness to carry out the obligations undertaken, the other contracting party could force the violator to do so, and if it stemmed from inability, the other party could take the case into its own hands. . . . For this reason, he continued, it would be much better to honour the obligations already undertaken or to comply with representations at the earliest possible moment than to let things go until it became too late and let others force one's hand. This was a warning to the Qing government that if it did not act loyally and faithfully as it was told, the foreign powers would have to compel it to do so by force or to take the matter into their own hands.

After thus waving the big stick before the Qing government, this knavish imperialist agent reassured it that, whatever actions might be taken by foreign powers, they would not be aimed at harming it. The powers only wished that it would keep faith in its dealings with foreign countries (that is, follow the rules set for a colony — *H.S.*). The foreign powers, Hart wrote, had withdrawn their troops the year before in accordance with treaty provisions; and had helped suppress the rebels everywhere. This was proof of their good faith.[1] The implication was: "Surely we have treated you in a most decent manner."

In offering the Qing government "advice" by intimidation and cajolery, the foreign powers were naturally prompted by a desire to promote their own interests. At the same time, they really wished to

[1] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Tong Zhi)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 40, pp. 16-21.

uphold this feudal regime, because supporting the regime and carrying out aggression against China were parts of the same process. The only regret of the aggressive powers was that, though they carried out their tutorial role patiently and assiduously, the Qing government, as a pupil, proved too corrupt and weak to stand on its own feet.

At times the "tutors" lost their temper. In 1875, for instance, the British Minister Thomas Wade lectured Li Hongzhang in the following words:

> Since the 11th year of the reign of Xian Feng (1861), China has been managing its affairs worse and worse. It is behaving like a 15 or 16-year-old youth with a mind of a year-old infant. . . . The Zongli Yamen says that it requires time to deliberate and put things right, but up to now nothing has been done. You may try to fool me today, you may try to hold me off by some irrelevant excuse tomorrow, but I say that I am not going to be cheated by anybody from now on. Has China done anything to fulfil the provisions of the treaties?

Wade then went on:

> If no changes are introduced in the present state of affairs, I am afraid that eventually China will find it difficult to maintain its independence. And this opinion is not my own; it is shared by other foreign officials and people.[1]

This was insulting blackmail of a most sinister kind, which, to say the least of it, had nothing in common with "diplomatic finesse." But Li Hongzhang, a man occupying a highly responsible post in the Qing government, swallowed it slavishly.

On the other hand, there were times when the "tutors" felt quite satisfied with the progress made by their usually pigheaded pupil. For instance, referring to the campaign launched by the Qing government against the Nian forces in 1865, Freeman-Mitford wrote:

> We have good tidings with regard to the rebels, who were in Shantung; they appear to be dispersed, some South and some West, and the capital is safe. For once the Chinese (should read the Qing government — *H.S.*) can lay the praise to themselves, they having acted without foreign aid.[2]

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[1] See Li Hongzhang, *Zongli Yamen Correspondence* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, pp. 32-33.

[2] Freeman-Mitford, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

In the same year, Freeman-Mitford wrote: "Although in our recent dealings with the Chinese they have shown better faith and more loyalty than before, we have still many crows to pick with them."[1] This statement reflects the feeling that the Qing government was still considered a promising pupil and should be given further schooling.

4. THE PAPER TIGER COLLAPSED

Enough has been said to show that the so-called "regeneration during the reign of Tong Zhi" was nothing but an ignominious, patched-up paper tiger. Towards the end of the reign of Tong Zhi and at the beginning of that of Guang Xu, this paper tiger rapidly collapsed.

In the first place there was the incident involving French missionaries in Tianjin. It arose from the developing conflicts between the Chinese people and the activities of foreign religious missions. After 1861, the missionaries, taking advantage of the safeguards laid down in the treaties, penetrated into the interior of China. Although there might have been a few who were not deliberate cat's-paws of imperialist aggression, all of them made maximum use of the influence exerted on China by the aggressive powers to lay claim to privileged positions.

Trembling in fear before all foreigners, the Qing officials treated the missionaries as reverently as they did their own superiors. So great were the power and influence of foreign missions in China that even their Chinese converts enjoyed a special status both before the law and in society. If a lawsuit involved Chinese converts, the magistrates dared not render judgments against them. Tax collectors, while extorting money from the common people, waived their demands on the converts who were shielded by foreign missions. All this aroused the hatred of the common people for the foreign missions and their ire sometimes led to such violent actions as the burning of churches and killing of missionaries.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

Incidents involving foreign missionaries occurred in Jiangxi, Guizhou and Hunan as early as 1862. After that they occurred in quick succession in Yangzhou in Jiangsu Province, Taming and Guangping in Zhili Province (now Hebei) and in various places in Sichuan and Guizhou. All such incidents were seized by the foreign envoys in China as a pretext to exact further concessions, and this forced the Qing authorities to suppress the outbursts.

The Tianjin Incident occurred in 1870. In the course of a mass demonstration meeting against French missionaries there, French Consul H. V. M. Fontanier opened fire on the Qing officials present at the meeting and the demonstrators. The officials withdrew but the demonstrators, their indignation roused to the highest pitch, killed the consul and smashed a French church. France immediately threatened a declaration of war. Actually, however, it was then engaged in a war with Prussia, and could not send armed forces to the Far East. But the Qing authorities submitted to the threats of the French just the same, and took immediate steps to satisfy the demands presented by these foreign masters. Zeng Guofan was sent to Tianjin to handle the case. The result was that a number of local officials in the city were exiled and 16 innocent civilians were sentenced to death. Moreover, the Qing government paid the French an indemnity of 460,000 taels of silver and sent a special official to France to apologize.

While handling this case, Zeng Guofan expressed the opinion that the various incidents involving foreign missionaries were "the result of the pent-up grievances of the common people." At the same time, however, he claimed that "in dealing with the incident at Tianjin there is no alternative but to swallow the bitter pill to save the situation."[1] The prescription "to swallow the bitter pill to save the situation" actually meant the betrayal of the people at the bidding of the imperialists. So Zeng Guofan, who had been credited with having made the greatest contribution to the "regeneration during the reign of Tong Zhi," revealed himself as more than ready to curry favour with foreign powers.

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[1] Zeng Guofan, *Memorials* (in Chinese), Vol. 35, pp. 38-39.

In the last year of the reign of Tong Zhi (1874), Japan, which was growing as a power, also took a jab at this paper tiger of "regeneration." On a certain pretext, Japan sent troops to Taiwan to threaten the Qing authorities. The latter lacked the courage to take a strong stand against Japan. They asked the United States and Britain to mediate, and were prepared to pay an indemnity to get Japan to withdraw its troops from Taiwan. This incident aroused the interest of the Western powers in the reckless audacity of this newly emerging small Oriental state, and their desire to support it in the belief that no better watchdog could be found to set over China.

At the same time, the British raised a big hullabaloo over the Margary Incident, which they used to hold the Qing government to ransom. Although the extensive interests of the imperialist powers in China had been made secure by the treaties of Tianjin, the British sought to extend their privileges further. In 1869, in accordance with a clause in the Treaty of Tianjin which provided for its revision every ten years, China and Britain began negotiations for a new treaty. The London government obtained a favourable new treaty, but refused to ratify it because British merchants thought it inadequate. The Margary Incident, of which Britain took advantage to browbeat the Qing government into further revising the treaty according to their wishes, occurred in 1875. It took its name from a member of the staff of the British Legation who was killed while on his way to Yunnan Province, where he was going to make a "survey." The incident itself was a result of the ambition of the British to extend their influence into Yunnan from Burma, and had nothing to do with treaty revision. Nevertheless, the British Minister Thomas Wade immediately presented the Qing government with a series of demands and threatened to depart from the capital and to resort to arms. These threats frightened the Qing authorities. The Inspector General of Customs, Robert Hart, again offered his "good offices" to help the Chinese government settle the matter. "Helped" by Hart, Li Hongzhang conferred with Thomas Wade in Yantai, and the result was the Chefoo Convention signed in 1876.

The new treaty, apart from settling the Margary Incident and providing for an indemnity and apology and safeguards for the British entry into Yunnan, satisfied all the other demands presented by the British. More concrete provisions governing extraterritorial rights were laid down; new treaty ports were opened up, the Changjiang River was thrown open to British vessels and British nationals were granted free entry into Tibet. In fact, the Chefoo Convention was an extension of the Treaty of Nanking (1842) and the treaties of Tianjin (1858). But while the latter two came out of wars, this new treaty was concluded without the loss of a single British soldier. After signing the Chefoo Convention, Li Hongzhang said:

> It is only because the court circles are greatly worried and the situation is really difficult and even critical that there arises the necessity for patience and forbearance so as to calm the storm. . . . If the foreigners are restrained in a proper manner it may well be that all will be well in the next twenty years.[1]

Thus the servility of another "famous" Qing official active in the "regeneration of the reign of Tong Zhi" was brought into the open.

In 1879, the Qing government became involved in a dispute with tsarist Russia on the Ili question. (Russian troops had occupied the city. After protracted negotiations, the Qing government in 1881 redeemed it by raising a loan — *H.S.*) In the meantime, Germany, with British support, forced the Qing government to conclude a new commercial treaty. The Qing government found nothing better to do than to servilely come to terms with the foreign powers. The helplessness of this government and the dilemma in which it found itself were fully exposed. Although some officials were loud in advocating war as a means of settling disputes with foreign powers, these were merely outcries of indignation. The Qing rulers continued to follow the policy of doing everything to avert war, for they feared war would bring on their heads the same disaster that had befallen them in 1860.

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[1] Li Hongzhang, *Correspondence with Friends and Colleagues* (in Chinese), Vol. 16, p. 25.

Nonetheless war came. The Sino-French War broke out in 1884.

This Sino-French War, however, was not the consequence of the policy of the Qing government. The Chinese force which engaged the enemy in the front lines was the "Black Flag Army" commanded by Liu Yongfu — composed of peasants which had been active along the borders of Guangdong and Guangxi during the Taiping Uprising and had since taken refuge in Indo-China. Although ill-equipped, this peasant revolutionary army held the battleline in the national war and inflicted considerable losses on the aggressive French forces. From the very beginning the Qing authorities gave the impression of clamouring for war, but all the time they were negotiating peace with the French and were ready to recognize French claims in Indo-China. France declared war on China in 1884 in order to annex Indo-China outright. Although the French won naval battles off Fujian and Taiwan in 1885, their land forces suffered a serious defeat in Langson in northern Indo-China. In no way could it be said that China had lost this war. Yet, the Qing authorities accepted humiliating peace terms and recognized Indo-China as a French protectorate, surprising even the French themselves.

While for all this the Qing rulers had only their own cowardice to blame, no small part was played by the intervention of Britain, an old partner of France in aggression against China. As shown in Section 2 of this chapter, Robert Hart, the Inspector General of Customs, played an extremely important role in the conclusion of the Sino-French peace treaty too.

Thus, in the years after the conclusion of the Sino-French War, the Western powers made further important gains in their aggression against China. The new treaties gave them more privileges than had been conceded by the treaties of Tianjin. Moreover, the Western powers turned some of China's close neighbours into their colonies and paved the way for the intrusion into the West China hinterland. Burma, and Vietnam had fallen victims of imperialism and the dagger of Japanese aggression was thrust at Korea. The

tentacles of imperialist aggressors spread towards Mongolia, Tibet, Sichuan and Yunnan.

How did the Qing rulers cover up their humiliation and defeats? With the myth of "regeneration" quickly exploded, they could do nothing but "compromise with the foreign powers" as Zeng Guofan had suggested, or, in the words of Guo Songtao, "get along with the foreign powers with utmost sincerity." To claim that these were temporary concessions to gain a breathing space for later improvement of the situation was plain humbug, and the catchword "playing off one power against another" was mere self-deception.

As a matter of fact, the reactionary rulers had no intention whatsoever of extricating themselves from the humiliations heaped upon them by the foreign powers. The year following the conclusion of the Sino-French War, Zeng Jize, Zeng Guofan's son, who at one time represented the Qing court in London and St. Petersburg, contributed an article to a foreign newspaper under the title "China: The Sleep and the Awakening." He frankly wrote:

> . . . China has never been on such friendly terms with the Western powers as now. In particular it has maintained especially cordial relations with Britain. When foreign powers present reasonable requests China is always ready to consider them in a favourable light. Such a spirit of magnanimity was seldom displayed in the past. China is at present maintaining friendly relations with foreign powers and will continue to do so in the future. I am of the opinion that, though mindful of the reverses it has suffered at the hands of foreign powers, China, unlike those who cherish permanent grudges, will not give up its efforts to maintain good relations with all powers. . . .[1]

This brazen statement, straight from the mouth of a diplomat, indeed set the tune for all later comprador-politicians in China.

The policy of "playing off one power against another" is reputed to have been initiated by the diplomat Li Hongzhang. In 1874, he expressed his opinion on the question of Taiwan, which was then threatened by Japan: "It would," he wrote, "be better to place it under the joint control of the powers than abandon it to

[1] From the Chinese translation of the English original.

one power only."[1] This remedy he also applied to China as a whole. As Japan's ambitions towards Korea became daily clearer, Qing officialdom advised the Korean government to adopt a policy of establishing diplomatic relations with all European powers. The reasons for this policy were indicated in a dispatch by Ding Richang[2] to the Zongli Yamen and quoted in the latter's memorial to the throne. The dispatch said:

> Japan nurses the ambition of annexing Korea. The Western powers, on the other hand, have never destroyed the independence of other nations. Should Japan provoke a conflict with Korea, the treaty powers would condemn the Japanese action. In these circumstances, Japan would not dare act unscrupulously.[3]

Li Hongzhang's note to responsible officials of the Korean Government was couched in similar terms. He wrote:

> To cope with the present situation, it is necessary to resort to the method of "curing a poisoned patient with poison," of playing off one enemy against another. For this purpose no opportunity should be lost to conclude separate treaties with the Western powers so as to deter Japan from going to extremes.[4]

By now, Li Hongzhang had gradually climbed to the leading position of directing the foreign policy of the Qing government. Almost no important diplomatic negotiations could be undertaken without his participation. This was much welcomed by the foreign powers. The policy Li proposed for Korea was also the policy he had laid down for the Qing government in dealing with the foreign powers. People cursed Li Hongzhang for his method of "'curing a poisoned patient with poison," a method which only resulted in poisoning China and rapidly reduced it to the status of a semi-colony. Li Hongzhang himself, however, saw it differently. By following such a policy he won from the foreign aggressors the name of a

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[1] Li Hongzhang, *Zongli Yamen Correspondence* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 42.

[2] A comprador-bureaucrat of the Li Hongzhang clique.

[3] *Documents on Sino-Japanese Negotiations During the Reign of Guang Xu* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 32.

[4] *Documents on International Relations During the Qing Dynasty* (in Chinese), Vol. 16, p. 15.

"first-rate diplomat," and did the Qing rulers a service by obtaining the continued agreement of foreign powers to the survival of China's feudal order. From the standpoint of feudal rulers, the best thing they could hope for was to live on the sufferance of foreign powers. Their greatest hope was that the status quo would last forever.

Ten years after the Sino-French War of 1884, the Sino-Japanese War broke out. In such circumstances the Qing rulers found it difficult to maintain even this wretched status quo.

5. "PROMISING STUDENTS" OF THE FOREIGN POWERS

Another aspect of the "regeneration during the reign of Tong Zhi" was westernization. As shown above (Section 3 of this chapter), the foreigners were extremely dissatisfied with the dilly-dallying attitude of the Qing authorities towards the building of the telegraph service and railways, and sneered at the "new" Qing army. Nevertheless, a group of "new" officials during the reign of Tong Zhi took great pride in what they had learned from the West. By 1880, the Qing government had begun building railways, telegraphs and buying foreign warships to build a navy. During the Sino-French War, the main part of the navy was not put to use. Although this had caused the Qing government to lose "face," the Beiyang Fleet under Li Hongzhang seemed to have retained its potential strength, and was regarded as a valuable asset, a feather in the cap of the Qing rulers.

By this time the Qing officials had clearly divided into two types. First, there were the die-hard conservatives, who viewed everything from the West with hostility. They were of the opinion that steamers, railways and telegraphs were all "damned tricks and wicked craft" and not worth adopting. In 1867, Grand Secretary Woren memorialized the throne that the establishment of the Tong Wen College for teaching astronomy and mathematics would "make the people proselytes of foreignism" and result in "the collapse of

uprightness and the spread of wickedness."[1] In every critical situation, such as the Tianjin Missionary Incident, the Margary Incident, the negotiations with Russia over Ili and the controversy with Japan on the questions of the Ryukyus, Taiwan and Korea, violent and bellicose views were put forward by a "war party" at the Qing court, composed mostly of these intransigent and conservative officials.

It would be erroneous to assume, however, that the opposition of such officials to westernization stemmed from their awareness of the danger of imperialist aggression, or that their bellicose views were dictated by true patriotic feelings evoked by external aggression. As a matter of fact, these members of the degenerate ruling clique merely felt extremely uneasy about the way things were going in the midst of recurring internal and external crises the nature of which they sensed only dimly. They could not stand the shock of new things, did everything in their power to avoid them, and made ignominious and fruitless efforts to return to the "good old days." Their noisy advocacy of war showed only that they had retained the traditional attitude assumed by a succession of Chinese dynasties towards "foreign barbarians."

In 1881, Ma Jianzhong, who had studied in France and knew somewhat more about the West than his contemporaries, sneered at the war party in the following terms:

> If you ask them how they will fight and win, they can do nothing but pick up the historical records of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties or support their arguments with episodes from the Han and Tang dynasties. They think their petty arguments are enough to defeat Japan, Russia, Britain and France. . . . They have not got warships, yet they clamour: "Why not launch an attack in the East?" They have not an efficient army, yet they raise the war-cry: "Why not take some bold action in the West?"[2]

The war party did not understand the real situation, they had no responsible opinion of their own, and they were absolutely unable to think of ways and means of putting up real resistance to imperial-

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[1] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Tong Zhi)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 47, p. 25.

[2] Ma Jianzhong, *Memoirs* (in Chinese), Vol. 3, p. 24.

ist aggression. Therefore, whenever war actually seemed imminent, they held their tongues and dared not raise any objections to the humiliating concessions granted by the Qing government to the foreigners. Moreover, when all the new things from the West which they had vigorously condemned, such as the telegraph, railways, etc., eventually appeared in China and the aggressive forces of the foreign powers infiltrated deeper into the country, they acquiesced without much ado. They were content to accept the situation so long as they knew they could still pick up some crumbs from the foreigners' table. After the Sino-French War and the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, this "war party" gradually disappeared from the scene. Officials of this type could of course never stand up to the foreign aggressors. And being not "bright" enough to make themselves useful to these aggressors, they failed to win their favour.

At the same time, there emerged a group of "new" officials. These people believed that foreigners really excelled in everything, that the Qing government had to learn from them if it wanted to consolidate internal order, that it had to improve relations with them if it wanted to maintain its rule, and that rather than offend them it should make concessions to them in every dispute. With the emergence of such "new" officials, an atmosphere of westernization was fostered. Zeng Guofan, Zuo Zongtang and Li Hongzhang, who had employed foreign troops to suppress the Taiping Uprising, were representatives of this group. But it would be a mistake to look upon these "new" officials as representing the progressive force of the time simply because they displayed less intransigence about the westernization of China than officials of the old type. Actually, the "new" officials aimed merely at preserving the substance of the old social ruling order by relying upon some superficial knowledge acquired from the capitalist countries. They learnt something from capitalism within the limits set and permitted by the foreign powers and thus did nothing but pave the way for the aggressors. As to the opinions and behaviour of the "new" men in the sphere of foreign affairs, these have been dealt with at some length in the previous sections.

Zeng Guofan may be considered the first pro-American official in China's political history. During the deliberations on the desirability of employing foreign troops to suppress the Taiping Uprising, Zeng Guofan had vigorously advocated seeking American assistance. His argument then was: "The Americans look simple and honest, and have always been sympathetic to China's cause."[1] In 1864, Zeng sent Rong Hong, the first Chinese to receive a higher education in the United States, back to that country to buy machinery for an arsenal and a shipbuilding works. In 1872, the Qing government, acting on Zeng's advice, sent young men to study in the United States. Zeng Guofan died in the same year. He had achieved little in his attempt to westernize the country. The only thing to his "credit" in the sphere of foreign relations was his handling of the Tianjin Missionary Incident in 1870, for which, even in those days, he was condemned as a traitor.

Zuo Zongtang had collaborated with the French in Zhejiang Province during the campaign against the Taipings. In 1866, he established a shipbuilding plant in Fujian and employed as managers the Frenchmen Giquel and d'Aiguebelle, who had commanded the Sino-French contingent which had helped the Qing government suppress the Taipings in Zhejiang. During his subsequent campaign against the Nian forces and the Hui people in the Northwest, Zuo bought a large quantity of foreign arms, including German Krupp guns, which contributed a great deal to his military success. In 1878, Zuo established a woollen textile mill in Lanzhou, Gansu Province. The machinery was shipped from Europe to Ningbo, Fuzhou and Guangzhou, and then transported to the site with a great deal of difficulty. Ordered to send an expeditionary force to Xinjiang, Zuo raised a loan from British merchants in Shanghai to cover his military expenses. (This was the first foreign loan raised for waging a civil war.) In 1882, when he passed through Shanghai on an inspection tour during his viceroyship of Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Anhui, the foreign settlement authorities greeted him with a salute

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[1] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Xian Feng)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 72, p. 6.

of 13 guns. Zuo Zongtang was greatly flattered by the respect shown him by the foreigners. He died in 1885.

As far as the westernization of China was concerned, both Zeng Guofan and Zuo Zongtang played second fiddle to Li Hongzhang. During the campaign against the Taipings, Li Hongzhang established friendly relations with the British officer Gordon, whom he later described as one of the two foreigners he held in the highest esteem.[1] In the course of the negotiations with Russia over Ili, Li Hongzhang specially invited Gordon to come back to China from India to give his advice on the matter. In the period prior to the Sino-Japanese War, Li Hongzhang depended on Robert Hart, the British Inspector General of the Chinese Maritime Customs, for advice on foreign affairs. Even when he was negotiating with the British at the Chefoo Conference, he had Hart as his adviser. After his death the Japanese said that "in the first stage of his career he was pro-British and in the latter stage he became pro-Russian."[2] (The latter stage began with the period after the Sino-Japanese War.)

Before the Sino-Japanese War, Li Hongzhang had dealt with more than ten diplomatic issues of great importance, including the Margary Incident and the Sino-French War. He had also done much to westernize the country. He bought machinery abroad to set up the Jiangnan Machine Building Works in Shanghai (1865) and established the Nanjing Machinery Works (1867). From 1875 onwards, he continually bought warships from Britain and Germany to build up a navy. He sent officers to Germany to learn the technique of manufacturing arms (1876), and invited a number of foreign military officers to train his land and naval forces. The British naval officer Captain W. M. Lang was appointed naval chief instructor. Another influential foreign officer in Li Hong-

[1] *Cf.* Liang Qichao, *Li Hongzhang* (in Chinese), p. 84. According to Liang Qichao, another foreigner admired by Li Hongzhang was General Grant of the United States, but Li met the general only once and so had not established direct contact with him.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 87. The comment is quoted as having been made by Soho Tokutomi.

zhang's navy before the Sino-Japanese War was the German C. von Hanneken. Other foreign officers in the navy included Tyler, McGiffin, McClure, Purvis and Nichollas. Li Hongzhang, too, was the initiator of the telegraph and railways in China. In 1878, he set up the Kaiping Mining Administration, with the Englishman R. R. Burnett as chief engineer, and for the purpose of facilitating the transportation of coal, he asked another Englishman, C. W. Kinder, to build a railway, and established the Kaiping Railway Corporation. Later, in 1887, in order to extend this railway, he raised a loan of one million taels from the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, the first railway loan incurred by China. Moreover, he set up the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company in 1873 and the Shanghai Cotton Textile Mill in 1882. These two enterprises marked the beginning of the establishment of private-owned concerns operating under government supervision.

In analysing Li Hongzhang's efforts to westernize China, it is necessary to stress two points: Firstly, he concentrated his efforts on military matters, but did not go beyond the purchase of foreign arms and the employment of foreign officers. Secondly, in spite of his contribution to the creation of China's modern industry and transportation, his policy of placing private-owned concerns under government supervision worked poorly from the start, as the new enterprises were completely controlled by comprador-bureaucratic capital, hindering the free development of private capital. Li himself, however, built up a huge fortune. Speaking of Li Hongzhang's wealth, Liang Qichao wrote:

> It was widely rumoured that Li Hongzhang was the richest man in the country. This may not be true. But it would not have been surprising if his assets amounted to several tens of thousands of taels of silver. He was a big stockholder of the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company, the General Telegraph Office, the Kaiping Mines and the Commercial Bank of China. It was also said that he was the proprietor of all the big stores and money brokerage firms in Nanjing and Shanghai.[1]

During the Sino-French War, Li Hongzhang vigorously opposed war and advocated peace. After the war, his influence waxed

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

by leaps and bounds. His navy seemed to be the only hope on which China's future rested. In his biography of Li Hongzhang, J. O. P. Bland aptly wrote:

> The organization of the Peiyang squadron represented the work of over two decades; it reached its highest numerical point in 1886 (that is, one year after the Sino-French Peace Treaty — *H.S.*), its highest efficiency in 1890. In 1891, the squadron's visit to Japan under Admiral Ting created a great impression. . . . Li's last triennial inspection of the coast naval defences (1893) partook of the nature of a triumphant progress. There was his life-work, plain for all men to see and admire: his forts and schools, railways and dockyards, ships and guns, all bright with paint and polish. The guns boomed salutes, myriads of Dragon flags greeted his coming and going. . . . This was the heyday of the Viceroy's fame; but already the clouds were gathering fast on the horizon that were to obscure forever the sunshine of his prosperity. In the mind's eye, as one sees him returning from that highly successful exposition of his handiwork, amidst a chorus of praise and thanksgiving, one cannot but wonder how far the old man was himself deceived, how far acquiescent in his magnificent framework of illusion. For all around him, on the decks of his ships, in every office of his Yamen, were sleek rogues of his own appointing who were selling the safety of the state in their haste to put money in their pocket.[1]

Nevertheless, corruption alone is not enough to explain Li Hongzhang's failure. Since feudal relations of production had not undergone any fundamental changes, all plans for the development of industry and the establishment of a modern defence force on the basis of rotten autocracy and bureaucracy were nothing but a house of cards. Li Hongzhang himself was well aware of his own weakness. So, during the Sino-French War, he was determined not to commit his navy, and he fought the war with Japan only after he had repeatedly failed to avert it, that is, he took up the gauntlet simply because there was no way out. In the Sino-Japanese War, the modern army and navy Li Hongzhang had built up with such painstaking efforts completely disintegrated.

Needless to say, a man like Li Hongzhang was bound to be regarded by the imperialist aggressors as a promising pupil. Of course, they never intended to see China really become a strong power. At that time, however, what they feared was not that the

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[1] J. O. P. Bland, *Li Hongzhang*, Constable and Company, Ltd., London, 1917, pp. 227-228.

Qing government would grow too strong externally but that it would become too weak to "stabilize" the country. Building up a defence force in the way Li Hongzhang did could only do the aggressors good and no harm. Li asserted that in building up his Western-style defence force he was prompted by the desire to strengthen the country's coast defence so as to prevent foreigners from attempting an invasion. But in fact his action served no other purpose than to open up a market for foreign munitions merchants and pave the way for foreign aggressors to control China's military affairs. In short, Li Hongzhang built up his armed force for the very purpose of serving the imperialists and suppressing the Chinese people.

Imperialist economic aggression ruined China's feudal economy and this resulted inevitably in the emergence of capitalism in China. The imperialists, however, did not wish to see a normal development of capitalism in China. They wanted to see China ruled by a government which would be a pliant tool of the foreign powers and at the same time strong enough to "maintain internal order." In plain words, they never intended to allow China to become a country which could stand on its own feet. The kind of westernization carried on by Li Hongzhang suited the imperialists very well and therefore had their approval.

6. A NEW LESSON FOR THE PEOPLE

As mentioned in Section 1 of this chapter, the revolts of the peasants and uprisings of minority nationalities in various parts of China had all failed by 1874, some ten years after Nanjing, the capital of the Taipings, fell to the Qing forces; and during the twenty years that followed, the feudal rulers in China boasted about their Ah Q[1] type of "regeneration" while continuing to crawl shamelessly before the foreigners. But did this mean that the opportunity

[1] Ah Q is the hero of *The True Story of Ah Q*, a novel by the great Chinese writer, Lu Xun. The author fashioned him after the type of people who seek satisfaction for the failures and setbacks in actual life by regarding them as moral or spiritual victories.

for the Chinese people's revolution had been lost and that the pro-foreign bureaucrats backed by imperialism had won a complete victory?

The failure of the Taiping Uprising and other people's movements of the time showed that the days of purely peasant wars, which belonged to the feudal era, were over. In the new historical conditions, the feudal rulers were learning a new lesson — how to employ new ways and means to preserve their existence. The masses of the people too were learning a new lesson: they had to equip themselves with new understanding and organize themselves into a new force in order to wage a new type of struggle. Naturally this was an extremely difficult process, of which only a few incipient signs could be discerned prior to 1894, when the Sino-Japanese War broke out.

Such incipient signs included, on the one hand, the gradual development, among the people of the lower strata, of ideas and sentiments opposing imperialist aggression and the pro-foreign bureaucrats; and on the other, a steady growth of reformist ideas on the part of a section of the officials, scholars and gentry who were stirred by the events of the time — ideas which were quite close to those of the national bourgeoisie.

Mass struggles against foreign aggression had already broken out in various coastal cities, and especially in Guangzhou, after the Opium War of 1840. Following the Second Opium War of 1860, aggressive foreign influences penetrated deeper and deeper into the interior. The privileges and special status enjoyed by foreign merchants and missionaries as well as the servile attitude displayed by the Qing authorities became clear to the people, who inevitably gained a new understanding of the situation.

In 1865, Freeman-Mitford wrote that in a village near Beijing he met a peasant named Ma who told him:

> Ugh! they have not got a good officer among all their mandarins. They brought us into the war with foreign powers, and then when they saw the big men and the big horses, and heard the poum-poum of the

> cannon, what did they do? Why, they ran away and left us to pay for it all.[1]

Peasant Ma was talking about his impressions of the Anglo-French War against China in 1860. The opinions he expressed were then widespread among the people. Reporting to the emperor on the Nanchang Missionary Incident of 1862, Shen Baozhen, Governor of Jiangxi Province, wrote: "Popular gossip shows that the local populace charges that the local authorities are making use of the foreigners to oppress the people. Public feeling is running high and I am afraid that it may once more lead to troubles." Shen also put down faithfully in his memorial what had been heard by his men whom he sent out to make enquiries. Here is a sample:

> Government officials and the gentry are all servile to them (meaning the foreigners — *H.S.*). The officials do nothing and hope nothing happens. They just fool round and get their pay. In emergencies, they run away, not caring in the least about the life and property of the people. The gentry are no better than the officials. They also fly to safety with their money and valuables. The people are always left in the lurch, and this means nothing either to the officials or the gentry. From now on we'll have nothing to do with them. We'll manage our own affairs.[2]

The contents of the memorial submitted by the governor of Jiangxi Province were essentially the same things Freeman-Mitford heard in the village near Beijing. This fact is a convincing proof of the authenticity of both accounts.

Such was the situation in the earlier period. When the Tianjin Missionary Incident occurred in 1870, Li Rusong, a leading member of the Grand Secretariat, wrote in a memorial:

> Since 1860, when the treaties with China were concluded, Britain, France, Russia, the United States and other foreign countries have opened additional consulates in many parts of China and provoked popular dissatisfaction. Both at places like Huaixian County and Yangzhou and in distant provinces like Guizhou and Sichuan, the people clash with foreigners.[3]

These words clearly revealed the feelings aroused among the people.

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[1] Freeman-Mitford, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

[2] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Tong* Zhi), (in Chinese), Vol. 12, p. 27, p. 33.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. 73, p. 17.

In 1874, Ding Richang wrote that the various local officials regarded "the missionaries as gods and the people as trash." Referring to the tax barriers all over the country, he went on to say:

> Tax collectors are notorious for their excessive extortions of all descriptions. They search passengers' luggage in a most disorderly manner and turn everything upside-down, behaving as if they were highwaymen. While foreigners' belongings may be exempted from tax, the Chinese are liable to be fined heavily, in addition to having all their cargo confiscated, should they be discovered forgetting to declare even the most immaterial articles. It is inconceivable that the authorities should be so lenient to foreigners and so harsh to Chinese merchants.[1]

Li Hongzhang also admitted this fact when he wrote in 1867:

> Foreign countries serve the interests of their nationals, yet they have singled out the Chinese people as the object of their oppression. Still worse, they forcibly urge the Chinese officials to oppress the Chinese people and the imperial court to subjugate its officials. This is unreasonable and unjust.[2]

That even these high officials of the Qing court had to be so frank about the situation is in itself illustrative of the opinion of the people. Thus Ma Jianzhong wrote in 1894:

> In my opinion China today is being seriously humiliated by foreigners. Since the closing years of the reign of Dao Guang (1821-1850) they have imposed upon us those treaties and tariff restrictions with which they used to oppress other countries of the East. Their envoys in Beijing dominate our government; their consuls at the various ports trespass upon the rights of our local authorities; their big and small merchants, having consolidated their position in the concessions, exploit our industry and commerce; and their missionaries of all beliefs penetrate far into the interior and deceive our innocent people.[3]

These words, uttered by one who cherished reformist ideas, accurately reflected the state of affairs which was known to everybody at that time.

However, apart from carrying out ill-advised anti-missionary activities, the people of the lower strata were still unable to find

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[1] Ding Richang, *Some Articles on Naval Defence* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 25.

[2] *Annals of the Conduct of Foreign Relations (During the Reign of Tong Zhi)*, (in Chinese), Vol. 55, p. 9.

[3] Ma Jianzhong, *op. cit.*, (in Chinese), Vol. 4, p. 20.

any ways and means to wage a new struggle. Meanwhile, reformist ideas developed among the upper strata of the gentry.

The first group of reformists in modern China appeared on the scene at the high tide of imperialist aggression. This fact was strongly reflected in their ideology. In most cases they came from the families of government officials, and themselves held government posts. Though close ties often existed between the reformists and the high officials advocating working for the westernization of China, ideologically there were differences between them. The latter were satisfied with "peace" with foreign countries under the existing treaty provisions, while the former regarded these treaties as fetters for China. The latter were satisfied with the setting up of private industry under government supervision and of an army with modern weapons. The former, gradually but timidly, put forward demands for unrestricted development of private enterprise and even for political reforms. Prior to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, industry and commerce were already growing in the coastal provinces of China. The new industrialists and businessmen, while still unable to form themselves into an independent political force, looked upon these reformists as their spokesmen.

It would be out of place here to dwell in detail upon the ideology and aims of the reformists. We will discuss briefly only those which form part of the theme of this book.

As mentioned in Section 2 of this chapter, Guo Songtao, an advocate of westernization, praised the foreigners in 1876 for their observance of "international law" and justice. But Ma Jianzhong, writing in 1878, already realized that "the Western powers usually indulge in a great deal of controversy over international law not because they reason differently but because they have different interests.... The contending parties merely resort to international law as a means to satisfy their selfish ends."[1] In 1879, when the Chefoo Convention had already been in existence for three years and the revision of the Sino-German treaty was being contemplat-

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 12.

ed, Xue Fucheng, a subordinate to Li Hongzhang, pointed out succinctly that all the treaties that China had entered into with foreign countries were fundamentally unequal treaties. He said:

> In the early treaties entered by China there are two things which on the surface appear to be trivial but in reality are the source of unending troubles: One is the provision that any privileges conceded by China to one country are to be shared by other treaty powers, and the other is that foreign nationals in China are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Chinese government.[1]

The reformists realized that China's relations with foreign powers, as they then existed, were detrimental to the growth of China's private industry and commerce. With foreigners in control of the Chinese customs, import duties were kept low to encourage the influx of foreign goods. On the other hand, Chinese merchants had to bear the whole burden of *likin* (inland transit dues). Ma Jianzhong said: "For decades China has been bled white. This is deeply deplored by government officials and merchants, by the rich and the poor." He therefore concluded:

> The existing tariff regulations have for many years served the interests of foreign merchants to the detriment of Chinese merchants. . . . They should be revised immediately. . . . We should reduce the duties paid by Chinese merchants as they are our own people and impose heavier duties on foreign merchants who come to plunder our national wealth.[2]

In short, he proposed the abolition of *likin* and the increase of import duties. Chen Zhi likewise stressed that "authority over tariffs is an inalienable part of our national sovereignty permitting neither foreign control nor intervention";[3] and proposed tariff autonomy, the raising of import duties, and the lowering of export duties. These proposals were demands for the development of national industry, but they could not be carried out by the comprador officials who supported the westernization of China.

For those days, the ideas voiced by Ma Jianzhong, Chen Zhi,

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[1] Xue Fucheng, *Proposals on Dealing with Foreign Powers* (in Chinese), p. 1.

[2] Ma Jianzhong, *Memoirs* (in Chinese), Vol. 4, p 6, p. 9.

[3] Chen Zhi, *Concerning Practical Matters* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 5.

Xue Fucheng, as well as many others may be reckoned to have been progressive. These men criticized the bureaucrats who advocated westernization with varying degrees of sharpness. While these bureaucrats boasted of their modern army and navy, the reformists laid particular stress on the country's industrial and commercial weakness and on the fact that national interests were being sacrificed to foreign countries. While the bureaucrats used their influence to establish control over factories, mines and the communication system, the reformists urged that these enterprises be run by industrialists with government support. While the bureaucrats clung to the traditional political system of autocracy, their critics demanded "reforms" and proposed a "constitutional monarchy."

Writing in his *Concerning Practical Matters* shortly before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, Chen Zhi advocated the setting up of a national assembly. He said:

> The duty of government officials is primarily to serve the people. If they listen to the public they will become wise; otherwise, they will be stupid. . . . At present, the foreign countries trading with us are insatiable in their demands. When the national assembly is set up, we will be able to refer to the opposition of public opinion and resolutely resist their demands. Only a national assembly would be in a position to make the hearts of millions of people beat as one. The will of the people is the will of Heaven, and we will be able to observe the ways of Heaven if we act in conformity with the people's will.[1]

True, there was exceedingly little of real democracy in Chen Zhi's ideas. In those dark days of old China, however, such an assertion could not but be regarded as quite a novel and noteworthy event.

It may be seen from all the foregoing that, with the development of new historical conditions, the people of the lower strata were becoming more dissatisfied and restless. At the same time, reformist ideas — new ideas that ran counter to the will of the ruling clique — were developing among the upper gentry.

These factors helped to make inevitable the great changes that took place in the social and political conditions of China as soon as the Sino-Japanese War dealt a crushing blow to the entire ruling order.

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[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 10.

Chapter III

THE "FOREIGNERS' COURT" (1894-1911)

1. "PARTITION" AND THE "OPEN DOOR"

Having concluded the first commercial treaty with China in 1871, Japan began to commit aggression against China and Korea and to prepare unremittingly for an armed invasion of these countries. These actions by the newly rising imperialist power of Japan led eventually to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894.

Ranged against Japan was the old Qing empire which, with foreign help, had been building a modern navy and army for twenty years.

But it was impossible for the corrupt, imperialist-dominated Qing government to wage a real war of resistance against foreign invasion. The war lasted only half a year. It lost one battle after another, on land and at sea, and Li Hongzhang's Beiyang Fleet was completely destroyed. A petition jointly signed by successful candidates for provincial examinations then staying in Beijing advised the court to move the capital and to fight on with greater resolution but the cowardly Qing rulers had lost heart in continuing the war. Britain and the United States successively offered to mediate and Li Hongzhang was sent to Japan as a plenipotentiary to sue for peace. In 1895, the humiliating Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed.

Japan's victory and the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki created quite a stir among the imperialist aggressors against China.

Although prior to 1894 it had extended its influence to Korea with the connivance of Western powers, Japan did not yet stand on

the same footing with them. The Western powers used it only as a watchdog to keep an eye on China and as a check on Russia. But after the Sino-Japanese War, Japan not only received territory and war reparations with which to increase its military strength, but also gained a position of equality with the Western powers in China, thus becoming a full member of the imperialist front of aggression against China. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Russia, extremely jealous of Japan's new power, approached France and Germany to apply pressure jointly on Japan and thus forced the latter to return the Liaodong Peninsula to China in exchange for a further indemnity from the Qing government. Britain and the United States, on the other hand, continued to support and encourage the newly rising imperialist Japan with a view to preventing the expansion of the Russian empire. As a result of the rivalry between the powers in the Far East, international antagonisms became more acute.

The Western powers were surprised at the speedy defeat suffered by China in the war under the Qing rulers. The ship which they had hoped to keep afloat was in danger of sinking at any moment. They saw that if Japan or any other power took independent action to conquer China, or if a people's uprising like that of the Taipings broke out again, the Qing government would be powerless to cope with the situation. Consequently, while continuing their policy of "saving the sinking ship," they hastened to undertake new moves against China to secure their own interests.

The last decade of the 19th century saw industry develop rapidly in the capitalist countries of Europe and America, a period in which the rule of monopoly finance capital was gradually established. From then on, these countries entered the stage of imperialism, in which they all went on the prowl for additional colonies. Practically all of Africa had been carved up and the greater part of Asia become their colonies. The powers were no longer satisfied with the privileges secured earlier in China which enabled them to dump their goods and plunder the country. And so, in the five or six years following the Sino-Japanese War, the imperialist powers scrambled

madly to acquire leased territories, establish "spheres of influence," and make their investments in China.

As a consequence of the competition among the powers, most of the important ports along the China coast became foreign leased territories. The aggressors also wrested from China the right to invest in the construction of important railways and in the exploitation of important mines. The right to construct railways gave the imperialist powers concerned a chance to secure special territorial privileges along each line.

In order to legalize their "spheres of influence," the powers demanded that the Qing government promise publicly that no land within the sphere of any one of them would be leased to any other power. To avoid sharpening conflicts, they often agreed among themselves on the recognition of each other's sphere of influence. By 1899, Britain had grabbed the port of Weihaiwei and made the Changjiang Valley its sphere of influence; Russia had occupied Dalian and Lüshun and regarded the northeastern provinces and Mongolia as its own sphere; Germany had seized Jiaozhou Bay and placed Shandong Province under its control; France had compelled the Qing government to agree to its special privileges and interests in Yunnan Province and in certain parts of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces and had also "leased" Guangzhou Bay; Japan, in addition to having seized Taiwan and established control over Korea as a result of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, had further compelled the Qing government to declare that it would never cede Fujian Province, or the islands off the Fujian coast, to any other country. In this way, a situation was created for the partition of China by the powers.

Lenin, the great friend of the Chinese people, made the following comment on the situation:

> The European governments (the Russian Government among the very first) have already started to partition China. However, they have not begun this partitioning openly, but stealthily like thieves. They began to rob China as ghouls rob corpses.[1]

[1] Lenin, "The War in China," *Collected Works*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1960, Vol. IV, p. 374.

What policy did the Qing rulers follow to counter such a situation? The man then actually in charge of foreign affairs was Li Hongzhang whose foreign policy has been dealt with in the previous chapter. Before the Sino-Japanese War, Li Hongzhang was still able to camouflage his servility to foreigners by calling it a policy of "playing off one power against another"; and was able to deceive the people by claiming that he was making long-term preparations to build up strong armed forces. But with all his military capital gambled away in the Sino-Japanese War, Li was only left with the empty phrase of "playing off one power against another." His one thought now was to gang up with Russia to ward off Japan.

In 1896, a year after the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Li Hongzhang was sent abroad to visit various European countries. His first stop was Russia where he concluded a secret Sino-Russian treaty. It was the intention of the Qing government and Li Hongzhang to enlist the support of Russia to keep Japan in check, a course which Japan resented and with which Britain was dissatisfied. Russia was at that time contented, having got all it then wanted from China. Britain, Japan and other powers proceeded to make demands and also received all they desired. The actual application in those years of the policy of "playing off one power against another" amounted to nothing more than all-round appeasement of and yielding to the aggressors. Carrying out this policy, all the Qing government did was to affix its signature to the demands put forward by the powers, without showing the slightest sign of resistance in face of military threats or diplomatic pressure.

What, then, did the Qing rulers expect in return for going down on their knees before the imperialist powers?

First of all, continued recognition by the powers. It was the Qing government that the powers asked to endorse their demands; this very fact, it thought, justified its continued existence as ruler of China in the eyes of the powers.

Secondly, loans from the powers. The Sino-Japanese War had dealt an extremely heavy blow to the Qing government. Because of this it was not only all the more dependent on such "recognition," but foreign loans became an all the more indispensable medicine

to ensure the continued existence of the regime. Since loans to the Qing government could be exchanged for all sorts of special privileges in China, the clash among the powers to get the upper hand, i.e. to become China's creditors, assumed a most acute character.

Before the Sino-Japanese War, the Qing government did not contract many foreign loans. In the four years from 1895 to 1898, however, it obtained seven loans totalling more than £54 million. British and German banks ranged on one side, and Russian and French banks on the other, fought over almost every loan. In those years it secured several railway loans from abroad. Since whoever lent the money for the construction of a railway was given the right to control it, this led to fierce competition among the powers. The powers vied with each other in offering loans in their own interest. For the Qing government, whose treasury was empty, these loans were a godsend for which it was extremely grateful. With every additional loan by the powers to the Qing government, the interests of the two sides became more closely interwoven, and the Qing government grew more confident that the powers would not abandon it.

We can see, therefore, that in being servile and making all-round concessions to the foreigners, the Qing government was not thick-wittedly courting disaster for itself. Rather, it was shrewd and calculating. Although talk of the "partition" of China was then rife both inside the country and abroad, the powers could not yet dispense with the Qing government and divide China into colonies among themselves. The Qing rulers were ready to grant all the demands of the foreign powers so as to maintain their rule rather than endanger their own existence by refusing the demands of any one imperialist power. Hence the saying: "Give it to friendly nations rather than to slaves at home." In his *Memoirs of the Coup d'état of 1898*, written in 1899, Liang Qichao recorded:

> Gangyi, Grand Secretary and member of the Council of State, often said that he would rather give his property to friends than to slaves at home.[1]

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[1] Liang Qichao, *Memoirs of the Coup d'état of 1898* (in Chinese), Vol. 4, p. 14.

This is a perfect reflection of the psychology of the Qing rulers.

"Partition" was a term originally used to describe the carving up of Africa by the imperialist powers. In China, however, the powers' conflict of interests was much more complicated than in Africa. And what was more significant, China had for a long time been a unified country, so partition of China would certainly arouse strong opposition from the Chinese people. It was most advantageous for the imperialist powers to make use of the servile Qing government which, corrupt as it was, was still capable of keeping up a semblance of a united political power inside the country. Thus they could maintain and further expand the privileges they had already acquired in China, and strive for agreement among themselves. Owen and Eleanor Lattimore thus described the situation in China prior to 1900:

> Defeats had destroyed the prestige of the government, and the indemnities paid for defeat had put a larger and larger share of China's revenue under foreign control. Yet the foreigners, not quite ready to partition China, always gave back to the Manchu court just enough power to keep on ruling badly, without being able to rule effectively.[1]

It was against such a background that the United States proposed its "open door policy" in 1899.

In the foregoing description of the powers' scramble for spheres of influence, we have made no mention of the United States. But this does not mean that the United States was not interested in spheres of influence. In 1898, it had secured from the Qing government the right to invest in the building of the Guangzhou-Hankou Railway and had later given up this right when other powers intervened. True, the United States did not acquire a sphere of influence in China at this time. H. F. MacNair said it was "too busily engaged in the war with Spain, and later with an insurrection in the Philippines, to show active interest in China."[2] It is to be recalled that, in 1844, the United States had coerced the Qing government into signing the Treaty of Wanghia. In the few years that followed

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[1] Owen and Eleanor Lattimore, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

[2] MacNair, *op. cit.*, p. 568.

1861, however, the years when Britain and France were helping the Qing government put down the Taiping forces, the chance of carrying out further expansion in China eluded the United States, because it was then preoccupied with its Civil War. For thirty years after the Civil War, too, U.S. capitalists were busily engaged in the economic development of their own country, this being the period of the rapid expansion of capitalist production in the United States. By 1870, the capacity of U.S. industrial production was second only to the British. After 1880, the United States overtook Britain and assumed the leading position. Having concentrated gigantic productive forces in their own hands, the big capitalists of the United States became ambitious and embarked on imperialist conquest. In 1898, the United States fought Spain for its colonies, with the result that Guam and the Philippines in the Pacific fell into U.S. hands. It was during its subsequent war against the Philippine people that the United States mooted to the other powers the "open door policy" for China.

It was long bruited about that the "open door policy" advocated by the United States was an exact opposite of the policy followed by other powers; that while others wanted to "partition" China, it was the U.S. proposal that had saved China from the danger of "partition"; that while others were guilty of aggression against China, it was the United States which aimed at preserving the country's integrity. All these assertions were contrary to the facts.

Firstly, the "open door policy," as suggested by the United States, did not mean that the U.S. was opposed to aggression in China. It only meant that the United States demanded a share in the loot. That was why the United States raised no protest against the "spheres of influence" established by the European powers, but only put forward the principle of "equal opportunity" for all. This meant: "I also want to share the privileges you enjoy in China. You get your share, and I get mine. Let's all get our shares. Let's continue to recognize the present Chinese government and enjoy in common all the privileges in China." Such was the gist of the "open door policy."

In his book *Problem of Expansion*, the American writer Whitelaw Reid said the extension of U.S. influence to the Philippines would create a U.S. "defence line" in the China Sea. In other words, the United States would ensure a dominating position for itself on both sides of the Pacific. The United States' claim to the possession of the Pacific would grow, he wrote, and she would then be in a position to bid for the domination of the extremely rich trade of the 20th century. A "correct" policy by the United States after it had taken over the Philippines would make the Pacific an American lake, said Whitelaw Reid.

U.S. Under Secretary of Treasury Vanderlip also said that the Philippines were the forward post in the Pacific and could serve as a basis for commercial activities in China and Southeastern Asia. Similarly United States Senator Beveridge asserted in a statement on January 9, 1900, that the Philippines would forever belong to the United States and that beyond the Philippines was the huge Chinese market. The United States, he said, would keep both. It could not forget its responsibility for this archipelago, nor miss the chance of building up its future in the East. All these statements prove fully that the United States, having paved the way to the penetration of China from the Pacific, put forward the "open door policy" as a step in its imperialist expansion against China.

Secondly, did the "open door policy" really imply a policy opposite to that of the other powers? Not in the least. Not powerful enough to impose this policy on them, the United States proposed the "open door policy" in identical notes to the countries concerned, and the latter, one after another, gave their consent. This proposal only put into a formal document the aggressions perpetrated by the powers against China in the past fifty years, and the more or less common stand then taken by them. Britain was the most influential power in China at the time; but as it could not prevent other powers from dividing China into "spheres of influence," it also raised no objection to the principle of "equal opportunity," so long as it enjoyed the lion's share. The draft on which the "open door policy" advanced by the United States was based was in fact originally worded by a British citizen, Hippisley, who had served in the Chinese

customs. The draft was taken to Washington by Rockhill, U.S. Minister to China, who submitted it to Secretary of State John Hay.

Japan was then also in full agreement with the U.S. proposal. In his book *Diplomatic Commentaries*, Kikujiro Ishii wrote that Japan's policy for "peace in the Far East" was to prevent the partition of China by the other powers and that it therefore considered the suggestion made by the United States as a godsend.

As a matter of fact, not one of the aggressive powers felt strong enough by itself to swallow up China, so each reasoned that it would be most advantageous for it to maintain the status quo in order to avoid the danger of being crowded out by others, and to wait for a chance for further expansion. Consequently, Britain, Japan, tsarist Russia, Germany and Italy all agreed to the U.S. proposal, which was tantamount to a mutual guarantee by the powers of their joint control over China.

Although the "open door policy" directly concerned China, the powers did not deem it necessary to sound out the attitude of the Qing government. Of course, this was a "loss of face" for the Qing government, making it impossible for it to deceive the people by claiming that it was "playing off one power against another." However, it soon dawned on the Qing rulers that such a policy would bolster up their position as rulers of a "unified and integral" China and that if they honestly accepted the common control of the powers, the danger of their "losing the country" would disappear. That is why the Qing government, and the despotic and traitorous governments which followed it, later became so shameless as to ask other countries to "respect" the policy of the "open door."

2. "GENTLEMEN'S" DREAMS

The Sino-Japanese War and subsequently the threat of partition of China by the powers deeply affected China's domestic political life. Prior to the war, as already described, new factors had appeared on the scene: on the one hand, the gradual growth of reformist political ideas among the gentry of the upper social strata;

on the other, the gradual rising of sentiments among the masses against foreign aggression. After the Sino-Japanese War, these factors developed further.

The first tendency grew into a reformist movement led by Kang Youwei who made his début on the political stage in 1888. In that year, while still a student he submitted his first memorial to the emperor representing, in general, the views shared by the reformists of the time. In 1895, shortly before the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese peace treaty, he again submitted a new memorial, this time a collective one signed by a number (it is said more than 1,200) of successful candidates in the provincial examinations who had come to Beijing to sit for the imperial examinations. Both these memorials, however, failed to reach the emperor, and in the same year, 1895, Kang Youwei submitted two further memorials of his own.

In the winter of 1897, when Germany was demanding that China cede Jiaozhou Bay, Kang once again went to the capital and submitted yet another memorial, his fifth, to the emperor. This last memorial, with its forceful language and well-reasoned arguments, won him the confidence of the young Emperor Guang Xu. As a result, in 1898, Kang Youwei and some of his followers and colleagues joined the government. From June to September they carried out a number of political reforms which were promulgated by imperial edicts. These reforms, however, lasted only one hundred days (this is why this period is called the "Hundred-Day Reform"). In September 1898, the conservative forces headed by Empress Dowager Ci Xi launched a counter-attack and smashed the so-called "new reform" movement. The emperor was imprisoned. Kang Youwei escaped abroad. His followers were either beheaded, imprisoned or dismissed from government offices.

Kang Youwei and his colleagues had made every effort to win over the emperor and to gain the support of the influential high-ranking central government officials and provincial viceroys and governors. This shows us the nature of their political movement. At the same time, they also laid emphasis on organizing various "societies" (for instance, the "Learn to Be Strong Society" founded

in Beijing in 1895, the "Hunan Society" and the "Guangxi Society" founded in 1897 and the "Society for the Salvation of the Country" founded in Beijing in 1898) and on publishing newspapers, like the *World Bulletin*, *Current Events* and the *Hunan News*. Thus, this political movement had something of a mass character. It was one step ahead of the previous reformists who had carried out only individual activities.

But the people Kang Youwei and his followers tried to win over and rally round them were limited to a small circle of the upper social strata. They had little confidence in the power of the masses. In the political positions they adopted, they never went beyond the scope of reformism. Abolition of the old examination system which required the writing of stereotyped essays was their most "radical" demand. They hoped to achieve "local autonomy" founded on the power of local gentry and worked for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. It may be said of them that they summarized the political reformist ideas of the preceding twenty years, and in a more clear and systematic manner put forward their own views so as to shape a political movement which they hoped to launch on a grand scale by the direct exercise of the emperor's power.

There is no denying that this reform movement could be considered progressive by the standards then prevailing. But it had many serious weaknesses which made it impossible for it to overthrow the dark, reactionary ruling forces. Notwithstanding its utter defeat, this movement was of great historical significance and deeply affected the march of events in China.

A comprehensive discussion of the reform movement is beyond the task of this book. We will dwell here only on the relation between the reform movement and the international politics at the time.

It is quite clear that the movement, which bore a strong patriotic character, was the direct outcome of the ever-intensifying imperialist aggression against China. It may also be called a "national salvation movement" of the gentry.

In his memorials to the throne, Kang Youwei invariably and sternly warned of the deadly danger facing the country; his viewpoint fully reflected the gentry's sorrow and indignation. For instance, in a memorial submitted to the throne after the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese peace treaty of 1895, Kang Youwei said:

> During the recent Korean dispute, the Japanese attacked China. It was the greatest humiliation in the more than two hundred years since the advent of the Qing Dynasty and aroused the indignation of all the officials and people of the country. The humiliation would have been a comparatively small matter had it not opened the door to the partition of China by the powers, which is a much greater danger. Territorial cession is a small matter but the danger of total disintegration will be much greater if the people living in the frontier areas are left without protection. The danger facing our country has never been so great as it is today.

And further:

> It is a well-known fact that in ancient times, countries were destroyed by the armed might of other countries. But today countries are ruined by foreign trade, a thing which is overlooked by everybody. When a country is conquered by the armed forces of another country, it perishes but its people remain; when a country is destroyed by trade, its people perish together with it. This is the danger now facing China.[1]

In the winter of 1897, after Germany had seized Jiaozhou Bay, the contents of Kang Youwei's memorial had all the more power to stir. He said:

> Foreign newspapers all talk about the partition of China. It is just like the arrow in a drawn bow, which may be shot at any moment. . . . There is every indication of an imminent partition of this country. Faced by such danger, people do not know where to hide from death. . . . It is as if mines were laid all around, with their fuses connected with each other. It is enough that one fuse be lighted for all the mines to explode. The case of Jiaozhou Bay is just a beginning and Germany is the initiator. . . . When we give railways to foreigners, it means we sever the links between our South and North. When foreigners can dismiss our high-ranking officials, it means we have lost our right to appoint people to government posts. . . . I fear that henceforth the Emperor and his ministers will be unable to live peacefully for a single day or

[1] Kagn Youwei's "Third Memorial." See *Notes on Kang Youwei's Four Memorials to the Emperor* (in Chinese), p. 15, p. 21.

enjoy life at the scenic spots. They will even be unable, I fear, to live the life of commoners. . . .[1]

In voicing such a strong warning Kang Youwei did everything he could in his position. His slogan of national salvation was put forward, in an address to the gentry, in the following words:

> On whom will our four hundred million people and thousands upon thousands of our gentry depend and whom will they follow? We have just suffered a heavy defeat and everyone is expected to contribute all he can to the fight. National salvation depends only on our own efforts and nothing else. ("Speech at a Meeting of the Society for the Salvation of the Country.")

Kang Youwei and his colleagues keenly felt the crisis then facing the nation. Kang went so far as to point out that the emperor, as ruler of China, was powerless, that everything was being controlled by foreign countries and that China was, as a matter of fact, no longer an independent country. He said:

> The fact that a railway cannot be built without previous consultation with the German government (in the proposed construction of the Tianjin-Pukou Railway, which had to pass through Shandong Province, the German government was asked for permission by cable, but refused to give it — *H.S.*) and the fact that a taotai can be kept in office or dismissed by others (he referred to the Shandong Taotai appointed by the Qing court and ordered out of the province by Germany — *H.S.*) show that the emperor no longer has any power. ("Speech at a Meeting of the Society for the Salvation of the Country.")

At another time he pointed out:

> Although China is nominally an independent country, its territory, railways, shipping, trade and banks are all under the control of its enemies who can grab whatever they like. The country is really no longer independent although outwardly it remains so. ("Memorial on Policy Concerning the General Situation.")

What was the cause of this critical situation brought about by imperialist aggression? And how could it be changed? The re-

[1] Kang Youwei's "Fifth Memorial." See Liang Qichao, *Memoirs of the Coup d'état of 1898*, Vol. 1. Quotations from Kang Youwei's "Fifth Memorial" below are all based on the same source. Quotations from Kang Youwei's writings and speeches in this section including the "Fifth Memorial" and "Speech at a Meeting of the Society for the Salvation of the Country" and "Memorial on Policy Concerning the General Situation" are from the same book by Liang Qichao (Vol. 3 and Vol. 1).

formists gave a very simple answer: China is too incompetent and it is nobody's fault that it has become the object of abuse. For instance, in his memorial to the emperor in 1897, Kang Youwei asserted:

> Since we have been content to be weak and ignorant, how can we prevent the powers from attacking us and annexing our territory? Since we are heading towards chaos and total collapse, how can we complain that others are insulting us?

But the argument of the reformists stopped at this. Thus, instead of seeing that it was the corrupt autocratic regime which was responsible for China's "weakness, ignorance and chaos," the reformists believed that all would be well if only the emperor led the gentry in exerting some efforts. Furthermore, they never even pondered over the question of whether imperialist aggrssion would cease and the imperialists would withdraw voluntarily if China were to make an effort to stand on its own feet. They failed to understand that the imperialists would never give up their aggressive policy of their own will. It is of just such situations that the proverb says "the slightest divergence leads far astray." Kang Youwei and his colleagues, therefore, could not develop into an anti-imperialist movement; on the contrary, the reformists began to apologize for the imperialist aggressors and voluntarily capitulated to them.

The allegation that it was China's incompetence that courted abuse and that therefore others were not to blame was tantamount to justifying imperialist aggression. In a manifesto written in 1897 for the Southern Society of Hunan Province, Liang Qichao, Kang Youwei's famous follower, trenchantly pointed out: "The enemy may come and the country may fall any day." But why did not the foreign powers carve up China immediately? Liang thought that this was because partition would throw China into utter chaos, with consequent damage to their trade. He went on:

> But since China cannot help and protect itself, utter chaos is unavoidable in the long run and the trade activities of the foreign powers will be affected sooner or later. The foreign powers are already carefully considering the problem and are bound to partition China unless they find an alternative. But if we show them that we can really help and

protect ourselves, partition will be prevented and danger averted. The reason is self-evident. That is why after the Sino-Japanese War, the Western powers became hesitant to partition China. They have waited for three years to see us do something to help ourselves, but we have done nothing and so the Germans have started by seizing Jiaozhou Bay.[1]

According to Liang Qichao, the Western powers were well-meaning and had waited for China to help itself. They had simply started the aggression against China because they couldn't help it!

Another of Kang Youwei's colleagues, Tan Sitong, though ideologically the most radical of the reformers, also committed a serious mistake on this question. Tan Sitong, a member of the gentry of Hunan Province, was one of those executed by the reactionaries in the coup d'état of 1898 which put an end to the "Hundred-Day Reform." In his famous long letter to Bei Yuanzheng in 1874, he wrote:

International law is a Western code imbued with humanism and justice. . . . It is a pity that China, courting its own downfall, is despised by foreigners; it is not worthy of enjoying the benefits of international law, not because international law itself is undependable. . . . If China does not reform itself in order to be able to enjoy the benefits of international law, foreigners will reform us and control our life and death. With everything under foreign control, the four hundred million people of the yellow race will become slaves of the white race. In other words, our people will find themselves in the same position as the Ainus of Japan, the Red Indians of America, the dark slaves of India and Africa. These people had been unable to help themselves. When others entered their country they were driven to remote and barren corners where they now suffer from cold and hunger.[2]

In other words, China was too incompetent, was "courting its own downfall," and was "not worthy" of enjoying the benefits of international law "imbued with humanism and justice." This point of view was even more backward than that of the early reformist Ma Jianzhong, which we quoted in the last chapter.

These statements by the "reformists" hardly differed from those of the apologists for the aggressive policy of the imperialists. While their preachings that China should exert itself and become strong only served to cover up the imperialists' crimes, the "reformists"

[1] Liang Qichao, *Memoirs of the Coup d'état of 1898* (in Chinese), Vol. 8.

[2] Tan Sitong, *Complete Works* (in Chinese), p. 423.

allowed themselves to be dragged into a quagmire of reckless illusions, in regard to the problem of extricating China from imperialist bondage. In his "Fifth Memorial" to the throne, Kang Youwei wrote:

> The Germans will withdraw all their demands as soon as they hear of the edicts on political reforms — even if these reforms will not yet have been carried out. . . . Then we will carry out drastic reforms. Within three months, our system of government will begin to change and within a year many of the reforms will have been carried out. The whole country will then see the government in a new light and foreign countries will be surprised.

Tan Sitong was more cautious in his estimate:

> If the government promotes whatever is good and does away with whatever is evil, within ten years we shall be able to stand on our own feet. We will need no foreign protection and nobody will look down upon us. And when the time comes for the revision of the existing treaties, we shall be able to delete the clauses most detrimental to China's interests. . . . If we are able to convince one country to delete such clauses, other countries will follow suit. And in yet another ten years, China will become both prosperous and powerful.[1]

He also was under the illusion that with the approval of the imperialist powers, China could gradually free itself from the fetters that bound it without undergoing any fundamental changes. Reality, however, soon put an end to such illusions.

These reformists even entertained the illusion that China would be able to achieve the political reforms they were advocating with the assistance of certain imperialist powers. As previously mentioned, after the Sino-Japanese War the foreign policy of the Qing court was in the hands of Li Hongzhang who tried to cajole Russia into checking the growth of Japan's influence. The reformists, on the contrary, gradually came to favour rapprochement with Japan and its then ally Britain.

For instance, Yang Shenxiu, whom the reactionaries killed along with Tan Sitong in 1898, openly asked the Qing government to follow this course. Liang Qichao wrote about Yang Shenxiu:

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 412.

> In January 1898, when the Russians were threatening to seize Lüshun and Dalian, Yang Shenxiu was appointed to a post on the Censorate, and the first memorial he submitted to the throne dealt extensively with the world situation in general and suggested an alliance with Britain and Japan against Russia. In making the suggestion, he was very earnest and outspoken.[1]

Tan Sitong's close friend, Tang Caichang, executed by the Qing government in 1900, had also advocated this policy. In his article "China Should Ally Itself with Britain and Japan" written before the coup d'état of 1898, he maintained that Russia posed the greatest danger to China and concluded that "Britain and Japan will certainly not sit idle and watch China being subjugated." In Tang's opinion, there were two ways of "curing China's diseases." One of these called for a thorough treatment and the other for temporary relief. By temporary relief he meant an alliance with Britain and Japan. He said:

> With the combined forces of China, Japan and Britain enjoying complete superiority on the seas, Russia will not dare drive rashly towards the East, no matter how cunning it may be.

He further said:

> The Japanese who are willing to conclude an alliance with us and to sign a secret treaty of mutual assistance with China and Britain will spare no effort to support us. It is a rare opportunity that comes once in a thousand years. We are indeed lucky and happy to have such an opportunity!

The same article revealed something else. The Japanese General Staff had secretly dispatched Mitsuomi Kamio, Jutaro Kajikawa and Taro Utsunomiya to China. In an interview with Tan Sitong in Hankou they told him that the Sino-Japanese War had really been a mistake and that Japan would like to become China's friend and ally. They went on to say:

> If such an alliance is concluded, Japan will approach Britain on China's behalf and China will then receive assistance in the form of rails and warships as well as political and educational help. . . .

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[1] Liang Qichao, *Memoirs of the Coup d'état of 1898* (in Chinese), Vol. 6.

This sweet, honeyed promise by Japanese secret service men elated Tang Caichang so much that he exclaimed: "It is a rare opportunity that comes once in a thousand years."[1]

What shocking credulousness! With the blood shed in the Sino-Japanese War not yet dry, this group of reformists shouted at the top of their voices about the imminent danger of the partition of China by the powers, but swallowed the honeyed words of the Japanese imperialists, believing in the possibility of an alliance with Japan.

In the years following the Sino-Japanese War, the world powers aligned themselves as follows: Russia, Germany and France were on one side, and Japan, Britain and the United States were on the other. The Qing ruling clique intended to use the former as its main support while the reformists built their illusions on the latter.

After the coup d'état of 1898, Liang Qichao, with the assistance of the Japanese Legation in China, escaped to Japan. There he wrote a book called *Memoirs of the Coup d'état of 1898*. In the chapter devoted to an analysis of "China's Relations with Foreign Countries," he claimed that Russia was the only country supporting the reactionary regime of the Empress Dowager and Li Hongzhang, and explained that Britain and Japan did not want to "partition" China. He said:

> It is a fact that Britain and Japan do not want to partition China, yet it is also a fact that China is drifting more and more towards partition. Reforms are the only means of saving China from being partitioned. But what China should do before undergoing reforms is a question to which both Britain and Japan should give close consideration.

In other words, he was asking Japan and Britain to "support" China's reform movement. He suggested an immediate war between Japan and Britain on one side and Russia on the other. In his opinion, if the war "breaks out now, China will be saved, and it will be a war beneficial to the whole world."[2] The war which Liang Qichao wanted broke out in 1904. Tacitly supported by Britain and the United States, Japan defeated Russia. But what good did the Japanese victory do to China's reform movement?

[1] *Collected Essays of Two Outstanding Scholars of Liuyang County, Hunan* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, pp. 6-9.

[2] Liang Qichao, *Memoirs of the Coup d'état of 1898* (in Chinese), Vol. 5.

The effort of the reformists was directed at the solution of two problems. The first was how to secure China's independence. The second was how to place China on the road to capitalism. In these matters, they calculated that if China learned from the capitalist world, it would certainly earn the sympathy of the imperialist powers. Was it possible for a master not to sympathize with his pupils? Holding this viewpoint, they thought that it was unnecessary to oppose imperialism, that the change-over to capitalism could be accomplished by reformist measures and that such a course would simultaneously solve the problem of China's national independence.

What childish illusions! As Chairman Mao said:

> It is certainly not the purpose of the imperialist powers invading China to transform feudal China into capitalist China. On the contrary, their purpose is to transform China into their own semi-colony or colony.[1]

The reformists' plan of trying to carry out capitalist reforms, not being based on the struggle for national independence, was doomed to failure.

But could the reformists take a firm stand against imperialism? The Taiping Uprising, which had preceded the coup d'état of 1898, and the later Yi He Tuan Uprising (what bourgeois writers abroad call the "Boxer Rebellion") in 1900 proved that the greatest anti-imperialistic force was the peasantry. The reformists, however, were hostile to the "rebellious" peasants. This fact bore out an important law of history that when imperialism has become the powerful dominating force in a country, no political movement can succeed if it does not rely on the broad masses and instead turns to imperialism for support. The reform movement launched by the gentry in 1898 was but the first of the abortive reformist political movement which the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie were to attempt in the succeeding years.

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[1] Mao Zedong, "The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1965, Vol. II, p. 310.

3. THE YI HE TUAN WAS DECEIVED

The situation after China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 precipitated a movement for national salvation and reform on the part of the upper strata of society: the officials, scholars and gentry. It also turned the indignation of the masses against the foreign aggressors into actual struggle. While the former movement suffered a disastrous defeat in the coup d'état of 1898, the latter movement continued to grow rapidly and developed into the peasant movement known as the Yi He Tuan Uprising.

There was a substantial difference between the peasant movement of this period and that of the period of the Taiping Kingdom. The Taiping and Nian Uprisings were directed against exploitation by landlords and oppression by officials, whereas the chief militant slogans of the Yi He Tuan movement were directed against foreigners and their alien religion. In origin, the Yi He Tuan was a branch of the "White Lotus"[1] secret society which had long been in existence among the peasants in North China and had been banned by the Qing authorities. The Sino-Japanese War directly affected the peasants of North China. In 1897, when Germany had landed troops at Jiaozhou Bay and forcibly begun to build the Jiaozhou-Jinan Railway, it was the Yi He Tuan in Shandong that played the vanguard role in the struggle waged by the Chinese people against aggression.

The Taipings had made use of a form of Christianity, but in the Yi He Tuan movement millions upon millions of peasants and other sections of the population came together under anti-Christian slogans. The difference is not difficult to explain. At the time of the Taipings, Christianity had been something new to Chinese society, and the Taipings had employed it to oppose the preachings of the feudal landlord class which attempted to fool the people. But now, in the days of the Yi He Tuan movement, Christianity in Chinese society had exposed itself completely as an instrument of imperialist aggression.

[1] A peasant secret society of a religious nature. Peasant uprisings organized by this society broke out as early as the beginning of the 17th century. At the end of the 18th century it led the peasants in a large-scale peasant war (1796-1805) against the Qing rule.

And the Chinese people soon felt the impact of imperialist aggression on their lives. As for the missionaries, they were the foreigners with whom the common people came into direct contact. Assuming a hypocritical kindness and sham compassion, they lorded it over the Chinese people. It was by no means accidental, therefore, that the foreign missions became the target of mass indignation. In the preceding chapter, we mentioned the growing number of incidents involving foreign missionaries that occurred from 1862 onwards. The grievances continued to increase and finally culminated in the revolutionary action of the Yi He Tuan Uprising when imperialist aggression in China became most violent.

F. L. Hawks Pott, an American missionary in China, admitted that foreign missionaries, and especially the Roman Catholics, meddled in Chinese politics and arrogated to themselves the powers of government officials. He wrote:

> . . . it is our conviction that the policy of the Roman Church in this matter has been one of the causes of the present outbreak (the Yi He Tuan Uprising — *H.S.*); but at the same time, we must not forget that, had it not been for the weakness and inability of the Chinese Government to preserve order and suppress anti-Christian disturbances, the Roman Catholic Church would never have been in a position to demand or secure the rights which she now possesses.[1]

This proves that the foreign missions in China were openly arrogating to themselves the right "to preserve order" on behalf of the Chinese government. Was it wrong then for the Chinese people to regard foreign missions as the most concrete representatives of imperialist aggression?

In "The War in China," written in 1900, Lenin said:

> Yes! It is true the Chinese hate the Europeans, but which Europeans do they hate, and why? The Chinese do not hate the European peoples, they have never had any quarrel with them — they hate the European capitalists and the European governments obedient to them. How can the Chinese not hate those who have come to China solely for the sake of gain; who have utilized their vaunted civilization solely for the purpose of deception, plunder and violence; who have waged wars against China in order to win the right to trade in opium with which to drug the people (the war of England and France with China in 1856); and who

[1] MacNair, *op. cit.*, p. 586.

hypocritically carried their policy of plunder under the guise of spreading Christianity.[1]

We must point out, however, that the Yi He Tuan Uprising did not grow into a well-developed anti-imperialist popular movement. On the contrary, it degenerated into an abnormal and unsound one, and ended in miserable failure.

Viewed superficially, some of the events connected with the uprising may seem inexplicable. From the very beginning, the activities of the Yi He Tuan appeared to have had the blessings of the local Qing officials and later the protection of the Qing court. The Yi He Tuan, on its part, advanced the slogan "Support the Qing Dynasty, exterminate the foreigners." Its activities spread to the vicinity of the imperial capital and inside its walls. By June 1900, it was in virtual control of Beijing and Tianjin. The imperial army and the Yi He Tuan joined in laying siege to the legations in Beijing. The Qing government even declared war on the powers and gave full encouragement to the Yi He Tuan's activities. Then the joint forces of the eight powers fought their way into Beijing and the Qing Empress Dowager and the Emperor Guang Xu fled.

A few questions may be asked: Since the Yi He Tuan Uprising was a spontaneous peasant movement, how could it forgo the traditions of the Taipings and support the feudal autocracy? And since the Qing government, prior to 1900, had been content to play the role of an agent of the imperialist powers, could it really side with the people and join in a decisive struggle against the aggressors?

The facts show that it could not, and did not. It is interesting to quote from Kang Youwei's memorial to the throne in 1897. He wrote:

> Since the Taiwan affair (the cession of Taiwan to Japan — *H.S.*), the whole country realizes that the court cannot be relied upon. Good people are despairing of life; bad elements are hatching vicious plots, everywhere, especially in the border regions. . . . Malcontents roam the mountains and marshlands; members of the secret societies run riot in the interior provinces. . . . They have joined hands with bandit gangs and are waiting for an opportunity to strike. High officials are becoming more and more corrupt and oppressive while yamen constables and petty

[1] Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 373.

officials are creating more and more trouble. All over the country, there are ominous signs of coming disorders. Not to speak of the menace from without, there is a real danger of rebellion. . . .[1]

This is a vivid description of the state of chaos and unrest prevailing under the Qing government, which had submitted to foreign powers. Kang was obviously convinced that the peasant revolt was a frightful thing for the Qing rulers.

Being a spontaneous peasant movement, the Yi He Tuan Uprising could not have set out to "support the Qing Dynasty" when it first started. A few instances may be cited. In the summer and autumn of 1899, the Yi He Tuan in the Pingyuan-Enxian area in northern Shandong Province was led by "Red Lantern" Zhu, who claimed to be a descendant of the Ming emperors. Also in its ranks was a monk called the "Ming Monk." Such names and aliases were sufficient to indicate that the Yi He Tuan was anti-Qing. They began by harassing the foreign missions on the one hand and fighting the imperial troops on the other. Among the documents seized by the imperial army, there was one which said: "Attack Beijing on the 8th day of the fourth moon next year."[2]

All this proves the innate peasant character of the Yi He Tuan movement. Lao Naixuan, a government official, thus described its activities:

> The populace opposes the officials. Whenever leaflets are distributed, thousands gather. They are armed and hostile. At the slightest provocation, they want to kill and burn. The officials are helpless.[3]

But since the objective of the Yi He Tuan was anti-foreign, the uprising was much more complicated than a purely anti-feudal struggle. People other than peasants sympathized with and supported the movement for various motives. Among them were members of the gentry imbued with extremely conservative and backward ideas, who were afraid of new concepts and new things brought in through the influence of the foreigners, and some landlords who disliked and

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1 Liang Qichao, *Memoirs of the Coup d'état of 1898.* Vol. 1.

2 Jiang Kai, *A Story of the Yi He Tuan in Pingyuan* (in Chinese), p. 14.

3 Lao Naixuan, *Religious Sources of the Yi He Tuan* (*Epilogue*) (in Chinese).

even hated the missionaries because they could no longer lord it over their tenants once the latter became Christians. There were also local officials who nursed a grudge against the missions which had undermined their authority; and who, unable to suppress the people's uprisings, could only "appease" the people by turning them against the foreign missions so as to protect themselves from immediate danger. (In the event the foreign overlords complained to them, they could always shift the entire blame on the "mob.")

In such circumstances, the Yi He Tuan Uprising gradually developed from a pure and simple peasant movement into one of very mixed composition. Ruffians and local despots, influenced by the gentry and landlords, also joined in the movement and secured the support of the officials. These participants and their supporters tried to incite the masses to xenophobia in order to change the anti-feudal and anti-government nature of the movement. The political immaturity of the peasants prevented them from resisting such temptations and influence. More and more, the movement swerved from the right course and lost itself in a labyrinth of frantic, irrational anti-foreign and anti-modern activities which finally reduced it to a tool and victim of the ruling forces.

Yu Xian, Governor of Shandong in 1899, was one of the officials who supported the Yi He Tuan for just such a purpose. When the envoys of the United States and other powers protested to the Qing government, Yu Xian was immediately transferred to Shanxi, and his successor Yuan Shikai was ordered to co-operate with the foreign troops in Shandong in fully suppressing the Yi He Tuan. Though Yu Xian had flirted with the Yi He Tuan in Shandong, the losers were the people, not he. So after his arrival in Shanxi, he flirted once more with the anti-foreign movement of the people of that province. Nevertheless, Yu Xian's transfer from Shandong showed that the Qing government was continuing meekly to take orders from its imperialist masters. In fact, during the whole course of events in 1900, it never once tried to break with its masters.

To clarify this point, let us first recall the relations between the officials, the people and the foreigners which existed in Guangzhou after the Opium War (Chapter I, Section 2). We pointed out that,

between the people and the foreigners, the officials strove to "appease" the side which was most likely to threaten their existence. By this time the power of the Qing rulers had continued to decline and they no longer had any confidence in themselves. Kang Youwei described the situation as follows:

> Government officials, high and petty, look to one another in despair. . . . They spend their time sighing, helplessly awaiting their doom. . . . There is no longer a will to live. It is like the end of a day; the atmosphere is sad and gloomy. The sight is dreadful and pathetic!

The decadent ruling clique, which had cringed before the foreign powers and believed that no external crisis would arise, suddenly found itself — in 1899-1900 — confronted with an internal crisis not unlike that created by the Taipings, and, worse still, the trouble had started in the heart of its realm — in the provinces of Shanxi, Zhili and Shandong. It was a great shock. The rulers could not help thinking that, if they went all out to suppress the uprising and failed, their days would be numbered; but that if they resorted to a policy of conciliation and fraud, they might gain a temporary respite. Moreover, they felt they could take advantage of the inherent weaknesses of the Yi He Tuan. Consequently, the cowardly Qing government, which was at first terrified by the movement, shifted to a policy of deceit and lies to turn it to its own interests. This policy impelled it to stiffen its attitude towards the foreign powers, though only as a gesture. But as soon as the imperialist troops entered Beijing and massacred the people, it returned to the side of its masters and repented, maliciously announcing a punitive expedition against the "mob."

These changes in the policy of the Qing government occurred within the short period of three or four months. Traces may be found in the imperial edicts issued during this period.

In June 1900, when the Yi He Tuan had extended its activities to the vicinity of Beijing, the imperial edicts were still calling the people who took part in the Yi He Tuan "mobs" or "bandits" and declaring that they would be suppressed:[1]

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[1] All the imperial edicts quoted in this section are taken from Qiao Xisheng, *The Brief History of the Yi He Tuan* (in Chinese).

May 29: Recently in the vicinity of the capital, the village people have been organizing units of the Yi He Tuan. There are good and bad elements among them. Incidents are feared. The various yamen outside Beijing have been ordered to prohibit their activities. It is now learned that deserters from the army and bandits from secret societies have infiltrated into the ranks of the Yi He Tuan, causing disturbances. They have even killed some army officers, and burned and destroyed telegraph poles and railway lines. Such daring lawbreakers are no different from rebels. High military commanders and local civil and military authorities are hereby ordered to arrest the principal offenders immediately and to disband all those who have been coerced to follow them. Should they put up armed resistance, the officials may, at their own discretion, exterminate them as a warning to their would-be followers. At present, the people are disturbed; rumours may lead to incidents. Wherever there are churches and Christians, the local authorities should accord them protection so as to ensure safety and security and prevent incidents.

May 30: . . . The Yi He Tuan bandits are causing disturbances. . . . All over Zhili Province and near Beijing, the people are restive. If repressive measures are not taken at once, how can we suppress the bad elements and nip the movement in the bud? . . .

June 8: . . . Of late, armed rogues have been roaming the streets in the capital in small groups; they come together and disperse at irregular intervals. It is essential to restrain them at once. . . .

June 15: The Yi He Tuan bandits are creating disturbances in the imperial capital. . . . Last night, they continued to commit arson inside Beijing. . . . The imperial troops tolerate their lawlessness; they are allowed to pass in and out of the city gates at will. The people are awakened by alarms several times a night, and in the day they cannot do their work peacefully. Disturbances have reached such proportions in the very shadows of the imperial palace. It will be disastrous if action is not taken to mete out severe punishment. . . .

These passages vividly describe the activities of the Yi He Tuan in the Beijing-Tianjin area in this period, and show especially the deep dread and perturbation of the Qing authorities. Had it not been for the fact that the Yi He Tuan was made up chiefly of peasants who were naturally inclined to oppose the ruling class, the Qing authorities would have had no reason to be so frightened. They had already issued orders to exterminate the Yi He Tuan; they had also dispatched high officials to pacify the masses. But all these efforts failed.

June 20: Recently, both in and outside the capital, the Yi He Tuan bandits have been acting in a most hostile manner towards the foreigners and their religion. Day after day, they kill Christians and burn churches.

The disturbances are so widespread that neither extermination nor pacification is an easy matter. Foreign troops are now being concentrated in Tianjin and Dagu Sino-foreign hostilities are imminent. It is difficult to foresee how the conflict will be settled.

This entry gives a clear description of the embarrassing position in which the Qing rulers found themselves. The next day, an imperial rescript was issued declaring war on the powers:

June 21: . . . With tears in my eyes, I pray to our ancestors and solemnly call on our troops to fight. We would rather carry on a great punitive expedition and wage a decisive war than live dishonourably, forever disgraced. In the last few days I have consulted with our ministers and officials of all ranks and our opinion is unanimous. Near the capital and in Shandong and other provinces, the number of men who have spontaneously volunteered to serve in the army reached several hundred thousand in a single day. Even boys in their teens wish to take up arms in defence of their country. . . . It will not be difficult to defeat the ferocious enemy and uphold the country's prestige. . . .

If the words of this document were taken at face value, it would appear that the Qing authorities were truly calling the people to resist aggression with great determination. However, only four days later, in reply to memorials from Li Hongzhang and other viceroys and governors, other imperial rescripts explained that this step had to be taken because there was no alternative — in other words, it was something the ruling clique had done against its will.

June 25: The present disturbances arose unexpectedly out of a mass of complicated factors. The court has always been prudent in its relations with foreign powers and has never desired to start a war for trivial reasons. Your memorials correctly compare the strength and weaknesses of the foreign powers with those of China. This state of affairs is so obvious that it does not take an expert to fathom. . . . It is difficult to foresee how the situation will develop, well or badly. . . .

June 26: . . . Your memorials are noted. It is indeed a mature consideration in the interest of the state to say that hostilities should never be opened and that the Yi He Tuan should be quickly suppressed. Unfortunately, the Yi He Tuan troops in the Beijing-Tianjin area already exceed one hundred thousand men. They are very powerful and have vowed to wage a struggle against the foreign churches. They have turned up even in the neighbourhood of the imperial palace. An extermination campaign may lead to unexpected consequences. It would be more advisable to make use of them so as to avert a crisis. We are compelled to do so by *force majeure.*

The two passages cited above are a confession by the court of its desperate position and also of the true reason for its declaration of war. Fearing the power of the Yi He Tuan, it resorted to a war against the foreigners in an attempt to escape the onslaught of the revolution. It knew quite well that such tactics would arouse the anger of its foreign masters, yet, in the circumstances, it had no alternative. The Qing rulers, therefore, played a double game. On the one hand, they encouraged units of the Yi He Tuan who were fighting jointly with the imperial troops against the foreigners in the Tianjin area, praised them for their righteousness, granted them large sums of money, appointed a certain number of gentry and local despots as leaders of the Yi He Tuan and named high court officials as commanders. At the same time, they ordered their envoys abroad to express their "embarrassment" to the foreign governments in the following terms:

> June 29: . . . At this juncture, the rebels in Zhili and Shandong have joined forces and can no longer be controlled. Much as the court desires to suppress them, we are afraid that since they are so near, any rash action may leave the legations unprotected and cause great calamity. . . . The powers should understand that China, even unaware of its own limitations, would not go to the extent of opening hostilities with all the powers simultaneously and would not depend on the rebel mobs to fight the powers. . . . We have ordered the military commanders to continue to protect the legations with all means at their disposal. We shall use our discretion to punish the rebels. . . .

This is indeed the most disgraceful document in China's history. The Qing government told the people: "Do not oppose us; we are now leading you in the fight against the foreigners." At the same time it told its foreign overlords, most obsequiously and shamelessly: "Please do not misunderstand us. We are only fooling our people. We ourselves shall resolutely punish the rebels who have offended you."

It is clear that in the circumstances the Qing authorities could not honestly carry on a war of resistance. As a matter of fact, they had never mobilized large forces for it. The majority of those sacrificed to the bayonets of imperialism were the people who took part in the Yi He Tuan Uprising. At the beginning of August, as the joint forces of the eight powers threatened Beijing from Tianjin, the Qing

court immediately sued for peace. The imperialist powers ignored its appeal and entered Beijing. The fugitive imperial court could only complain in its rescript of August 19:

> This conflict arose from the clashes between the people and the foreign missionaries. The court had repeatedly informed the foreign powers through diplomatic channels of its difficulties in dealing with the situation. The powers claimed that they had sent their troops only to suppress the rebels and that they had no other intentions regarding our country. Nevertheless, their actions are contrary to their previous statements and incompatible with the principle regarding the maintenance of good relations among nations.

This was as good as assuring the powers: "Of course, you are welcome to suppress the rebels for us. But in forcing us to flee from Beijing, you caused us to lose our prestige." By the beginning of September when Li Hongzhang was travelling post-haste from Shanghai to Beijing to negotiate peace, an imperial edict had already foisted all responsibility on to the shoulders of the rebels and ordered their suppression.

> September 7: The Yi He Tuan is the real cause of this conflict. To stamp out the root and source of the uprising, it is essential to undertake thorough repressive measures. The Yi He Tuan is greater in strength in Zhili than anywhere else. . . . If these organized gangs continue to ignore government officials or oppose the imperial troops, military commanders should use all means in their possession to suppress them so as to uproot the source of the uprising.

The occupation of Beijing by the imperialist forces, offensive as it seemed to the Qing rulers, helped solve certain problems for them. When it saw the joint forces of the eight powers using the pretext of "suppressing the Yi He Tuan bandits" to pillage and massacre the common people in the Beijing-Tianjin area, the fugitive Qing government felt that it could still rely on and follow its masters to threaten the people. Once more, the Qing imperial troops ganged up with the imperialist forces.

Many a history book states that some of the die-hards in control of the government headed by the Empress Dowager also hated the foreigners and sympathized with the Yi He Tuan. This is a poor interpretation of historic facts. True, even the most obedient servant

may bear his master a grudge. It is a fact that the imperialist powers were already extremely dissatisfied with the incompetence of the Qing government and even sympathized with the reformers of the Kang-Liang (Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao) school. After the Empress Dowager had carried out the coup d'état of 1898 and imprisoned Emperor Guang Xu, she made Prince Duan's son the heir apparent, but none of the powers recognized him. This made the Empress Dowager, Prince Duan and the die-hard conservatives still more displeased with the "foreign devils." But, though they nursed a grudge against the foreigners, they never sought the support of the people to resist imperialism. This is quite clear from the imperial edicts quoted above.

Throughout the whole episode there were only two trends in the Qing ruling circles. On the one hand, the Empress Dowager, Prince Duan and a majority of the governing officials in the northern provinces, faced with an immediate threat from the Yi He Tuan, had to risk a policy of pretended support of the Yi He Tuan. On the other, the viceroys and governors of the southern and eastern provinces — Li Hongzhang, Liu Kunyi, Zhang Zhitong, Wang Zhichun and others — being far away from the actual scene of the Yi He Tuan Uprising, maintaining more intimate relations with the imperialists, and having had some experience of fighting the Taipings and the Nian, consistently held that their primary task was to suppress the rebels, and that in no circumstances were they to treat lightly their relations with the foreign powers. While the joint forces of the eight imperialist powers were attacking China violently in the North, they maintained friendly diplomatic and trade relations with these same powers in the South and East. Yuan Shikai, who commanded a very strong army in Shandong, did not move his troops to the war front, but instead raised the slogan of "Protect the region and the people," thus assuming the same attitude as the viceroys and governors of the southern and eastern provinces.

These two trends, much as they differed from each other, existed side by side within the framework of the general policy of the Qing government. The measures taken by the viceroys and governors of the southern and eastern provinces received the approval of Bei-

jing. Their opinions were described as "mature consideration in the interest of the state" in the imperial rescripts we have quoted.

There can therefore be only one conclusion: In substance, the Yi He Tuan movement against the foreign aggressors was at loggerheads with the feudal autocracy. The feudal autocratic rulers gave no real support to the people's patriotic movement but merely resorted to trickery and brutal fraud in their dealings with it.

4. "SEEKING FAVOUR OF THE FRIENDLY POWERS"

It is now necessary to throw more light on the attitude and policy of the imperialist powers during the Yi He Tuan Uprising.

The powers had paid little attention to the Yi He Tuan movement before it spread to Beijing. True, at that time they were dissatisfied with the incompetence of the Qing government, but they were quite certain that it was an obedient servant that could be trusted. In the first few years following the Sino-Japanese War, the Qing government did its best to satisfy the demands of the foreign powers which were in a position to control over its financial, military and political affairs. The imperialists, therefore, turned their attention to easing the conflicts among themselves over the demarcation of spheres of influence in China. They were not worried in the least about what the Qing government might do. The Yi He Tuan Uprising, in their opinion, was nothing but the reckless action of "rioting mobs." In 1899, the U.S. Minister to China compelled the Qing government to recall the governor of Shandong and issue an order to suppress the Yi He Tuan. After this, the imperialists were confident that the uprising would soon be quelled.

Putnam Weale, an English correspondent then in the capital, recorded the day-to-day development of the Yi He Tuan movement in his *Indiscreet Letters from Peking*. Here is what he wrote about the situation on May 12, 1900:

> Meanwhile, is there anything special for me to chronicle? Not much, although there is a cloud no bigger than your hand in Shantung not a thousand miles from Weihaiwei. . . .
>
> Meanwhile the cloud no bigger than your hand is quite unremarked

by the rank and file of Legation Street — that I will swear. Chinese malcontents — "the Society of Harmonious Fists," particular habitat Shantung Province — are casually mentioned; but it is remembered that the Provincial Governor of Shantung is a strong Chinaman, one Yuan Shih-kai, who has some knowledge of military matters, and better still, ten thousand foreign-drilled troops. Shantung is all right, never fear — such is the comment of the day.

On May 28, Putnam Weale wrote:

> The cloud no bigger than your hand is now bigger than your whole body, bigger, indeed, than the combined bodies of all your neighbours, supposing you could spread them fantastically in great layers across the skies. What, then, has happened?
>
> It is that the Boxers, christened by us, as you will remember, but two or three short weeks ago, have blossomed forth with such fierce growth that they have become the men of the hour to the exclusion of everything else, and were one to believe one tithe of the talk babbling all around, the whole earth is shaking with them. Yet it is a very local affair — a thing concerning only a tiny portion of a half-known corner of the world. But for us it is sufficiently grave. The Peking-Paotingfu railway is being rapidly destroyed; Fengtai station, but six miles from Peking — think of it, only six miles from this Manchu holy of holics — has gone up in flames; a great steel bridge has succumbed to the destroying energy of dynamite. All the European engineers have fled into Peking; and, worst of all, the Boxer banners have been unfurled; and lo and behold, as they floated in the breeze, the four dread characters "*Pao Ching Mien Yang*," have been read on blood-red bunting — "death and destruction to the foreigner and all his works and loyal support to the Ching dynasty."

But the legations in Beijing continued to consider the capital very safe. It was said that the British Foreign Office complained to its legation in Beijing that it had heard enough of the Yi He Tuan and instructed it not to send any further dispatches on the subject.

It can thus be seen that the imperialists did not expect the Yi He Tuan movement to spread. This was because they did not realize that in hacking off pieces of China and trampling on it they had sown hatred in the hearts of the Chinese people, and that the Yi He Tuan movement, primitive though its organization was, was strongly backed by the masses. They underrated the great strength of the Chinese people, little realizing that, once set free, it would shake the world. Besides, they did not regard the docile Qing government as being unable to withstand the onslaught of the people. The Qing government had indeed done everything to avoid a clash with the

revolution, but now it was so confused that it did not know what to do next.

The rapid changes in the situation in 1900 caught foreign governments by surprise and gave them no opportunity to appraise the real situation. Early in June, the Yi He Tuan entered Beijing and became the virtual rulers of the capital. The foreign legations were attacked and besieged. Chancellor Akira Sugiyama of the Japanese Legation and the German envoy von Ketteler were killed. The foreign envoys were puzzled by the position taken by the Qing government. Previously a prisoner of the imperialists, it now seemed to have become a prisoner of the Yi He Tuan. By then the powers had realized the seriousness of the situation; but the conflict of interests among them further complicated the situation, preventing them from immediately taking a common stand and quick action.

On June 10, a detachment of more than two thousand soldiers of several nations commanded by Vice-Admiral E. Seymour of the British Navy, left the foreign concessions in Tianjin for Beijing. As railway traffic was disrupted and the people all along the route put up resistance, Seymour's numerically weak force hesitated to advance any further and began to retreat after it had reached Langfang. On June 17, a combined fleet of the powers took Dagu and laid siege to Tianjin with the assistance of Seymour's troops which had retreated back upon the city. The imperialists were then forced to fight the hardest battle they had so far experienced in their aggressive wars in China, because the rising anti-imperialist sentiments stirred the people to heroic resistance. Even a part of the Qing government's Beiyang Army bravely resisted the aggressors. It was only on July 14 that the combined forces of the powers occupied Tianjin.

The hard-fought battle between Tianjin and Dagu served as a warning to the powers that, unless they were well prepared, they could not hazard an attack on Beijing. Before resuming the war, they had to clarify the situation, settle their differences and formulate a common policy. For this reason they did not launch their new expedition inland from Tianjin until August 4.

The powers had about twenty thousand men, the majority of them being Japanese, followed, in terms of strength, by Russians,

British, Americans and French. Austria-Hungary and Italy only sent representatives. Germany had mustered twenty thousand troops, but these were still on the way and did not reach China until September. On August 14, the combined forces of the powers stormed into Beijing. In September, the Qing government began peace negotiations with the invaders, and on September 7, 1901, it signed the "International Protocol" with the eight countries whose forces had participated in the operations against China, plus Belgium, Spain and Holland.

During the period when Beijing was under the occupation of the eight powers, the immediate partition of China was mooted by some countries, but not carried out. This was not merely because partition would have inevitably led to clashes among the powers themselves. A more important reason was that the powers realized that the essential factor in the situation was the anti-imperialist upsurge of the Chinese people which they had evaluated clearly even before their troops started their march from Tianjin. The Qing government, on its part, had given the impression of deferring to public opinion in its declaration of war on the powers. But in reality it had continued to curry favour with them through diplomatic channels. This was enough to show that the Qing government was still an imperialist tool. It was thus not to the advantage of the imperialists to write off the Qing government and go ahead with the partition of China. Such a step would have led to the intensification of the anti-imperialist sentiment of the Chinese people in various parts of the country.

Therefore, the reason the foreign powers gave for their joint military action, as declared in the notes exchanged between Russia and the United States in August, 1900, was to rescue the beleaguered foreign legation in China and to help China suppress the "bandits."[1] Already in early July, the Japanese government had addressed to the Qing emperor a note which stated: "As various powers have been dispatching troops to Tianjin since last month, Japan must fol-

[1] *The Brief History of the Yi He Tuan* (in Chinese), Part two, Vol. 1, p. 9.

low suit. The sole purpose for this is to suppress the bandits and to protect the legations."[1] We need hardly say that the "bandits" referred to by the imperialists were Chinese patriots fired with strong anti-imperialist sentiments. And the pretext of "protecting the legations" was also a poor one. It is evident that the imperialists intended to take advantage of this war to expand and consolidate their privileges and interests in China.

Nevertheless, the pretext given for the military action also reflected the real situation. Let us compare the position in 1900-01 with that during the two Opium Wars. During each of the Opium Wars, the aggressors declared they only wanted to punish the stubborn Qing government and had nothing against the people, hoping that such a pronouncement would win them the sympathy of the Chinese people. In 1900-01, on the contrary, they did not conceal that their military operations were directed against the people and not the Qing government, their purpose being to calm the autocratic rulers. This contrast between the two periods reveals the full range of the twists and turns of the political relations in the sixty years of imperialist expansion in China, in which the foreign powers allied themselves with the autocratic rulers against the Chinese people.[2] The Qing government understood and trusted the imperialists, even as it was fleeing from Beijing, it still maintained "The powers claim that they have sent their troops only to suppress the rebels and that

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[2] Cf. Fan Wenlan, *Modern Chinese History* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 422. Various comments were made at the time on the powers' policy in China. For instance, an Under-Secretary of the British Foreign Office said that China should be ruled by the Chinese. A member of the French Chamber of Deputies commented that territorially China was a vast country and its people had a strong will, and that neither India nor Southeast Asia could be compared with it. Robert Hart, an "Old China Hand," in an article published then said that China had been sound asleep for many years and that it was beginning to wake up. The idea that "China belongs to the Chinese people," he said, was beginning to take root among the people. The Yi He Tuan movement, he continued, was born of the patriotism of the Chinese people and was resolved to strengthen China's position and resist the foreigners. Hart was of the opinion that the time was not ripe to partition China and that the China under the Qing government should be supported so as to avert the "yellow peril" (that is, to smash the resistance of the Chinese people — *H.S.*).

they have no other intentions regarding our country." Here "our country" of course meant the Qing government.

The imperialist powers limited their war operations to certain areas in North China. Viceroys and governors, like Li Hongzhang, Zhang Zhitong, Yuan Shikai, Liu Kunyi and Wang Zhichun, who kept aloof from the fighting in the Beijing-Tianjin area, continued to "take measures against bandits and maintain friendly relations with foreign powers" in provinces under their jurisdiction. No wonder the imperialists were pleased. Speaking in the British House of Commons on August 2, 1900, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs St. John Broderick stated that the situation in China was receiving the attention of the Foreign Office and that Britain would see to it that war did not spread to the Changjiang Valley. He added that in the event of any emergency Britain would come to the aid of the viceroys and governors if they turned out to be too weak militarily to handle the situation themselves.

In October 1900, U.S. Secretary of State John Hay expressed opposition to an exclusively German military expedition from Beijing to Baoding, saying indignantly:

> The Great Viceroys, to secure whose assistance was our first effort and success, have been standing by us splendidly for the last four months. How much longer they can hold their turbulent populations quiet in the face of constant incitements to disturbance which Germany and Russia are giving is hard to conjecture. . . .[1]

From this it can be seen that the imperialists were very much in favour of the stand taken by Li Hongzhang and his ilk and were ready to use force to back them up. That the most powerful provincial officials of the Qing government had taken such a stand further convinced the powers that it was more advantageous to return to the *status quo ante bellum* than to carve up China.

While it is true that the powers distrusted each other and bickered during the war and in the subsequent peace negotiations, they generally followed a common policy and co-ordinated their actions. The "open door policy" which the United States had put forward

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[1] W. R. Thayer, *The Life and Letters of John Hay,* Vol. 2, p. 245.

one year before the expedition of the combined forces of the eight powers was one on which the powers were unanimously agreed; it became a basic programme shared in common by the powers.

In early July, 1900, the United States sent the other powers another note on the "open door policy." In October, Britain and Germany, "being desirous to maintain their interest in China and their rights under existing treaties," concluded an agreement regarding their mutual policy in China. Article 1 of the agreement said:

> It is a matter of joint and permanent international interest that the ports on the river and littoral of China should remain free and open to trade and to every other legitimate form of economic activity for the nationals of all countries without distinction. . . .[1]

The U.S. note spoke of the need to "preserve Chinese territorial and administrative entity." The Anglo-German Agreement stipulated that the parties would "direct their policy towards maintaining undiminished the territorial conditions of the Chinese Empire." All this sounded well enough, but its hidden meaning was exposed by the Anglo-German Agreement: they had agreed between themselves to "open up" China to all countries without distinction. Later, Britain and Germany communicated their agreement to other powers, asking them to accept the principles set forth in the agreement. Favourable replies were received and since the powers had reached unanimity on this question the "Protocol of 1901" was signed.

The "Protocol of 1901" may be regarded as an instrument by which the position of the Qing rulers was sustained and by which the imperialist powers consolidated their domination over China. By means of it, the powers made the Qing government admit its mistake in supporting the Yi He Tuan and punish the high officials who had dared to challenge the foreigners by making use of the people's forces. The Qing government was also required to extort from the people the huge sum of 450 million taels of silver to be paid as indemnity; pledge itself to suppress all anti-foreign activities, societies and organizations of the people; and allow the powers to bring troops

[1] M. J. Bau, *The Open Door Doctrine in Relation to China,* p. 188.

to Beijing to "protect" their legations and station troops at certain points along the Beijing-Shanhaiguan line. The Qing rulers professed themselves "moved to tears" by the magnanimity of this treaty, and indicated that they would serve their foreign overlords forever. From that time on, the powers became direct guardians of the Qing government. The diplomatic corps actually became the super-government of China, directing the Qing court in the "Forbidden City."

Whatever doubt may have existed about the real meaning of the "open door policy," the "Protocol of 1901" dispelled it. American imperialism was extremely satisfied with this document. John W. Foster, one of its propaganda men, wrote boastfully:

> While it (the United States — *H.S.*) supported the efforts to punish the really guilty leaders, and was firm in demanding measures which would guarantee the protection of American citizens and interests for the future, it manifested anxiety that nothing should be done to cripple or impede the ability of China in the maintenance of a stable government and its territorial integrity.[1]

In other words, the policy of the United States, like those of other powers as reflected in the "Protocol of 1901," aimed at securing the best safeguards for imperialist privileges and interests in China. At the same time it countenanced the nominal "integrity" and "independence" of China, so that the Qing rulers could sit "firmly" in the saddle.

After being hard-pressed by the people's forces and then ignominiously routed by the combined forces of the eight powers, the Qing regime, which had found itself in a most embarrassing position, was naturally overjoyed at the Protocol. It was no exaggeration to say it was "moved to tears." After it had accepted the Protocol imposed by the powers, the fugitive Qing government in Xi'an issued, in February 1901, an imperial edict to "all the subjects throughout the empire," claiming that "the hostilities between China and the friendly powers were caused by the rebellion of the Yi He Tuan bandits." The attitude of the government, in the words of the same document, was to "do its utmost to seek the favour of the friendly powers."

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[1] John W. Foster, *American Diplomacy in the Orient*, H. O. Houghton & Co., Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A., 1904, p. 431.

Commenting on the draft Protocol, the imperial edict said:

> The present agreement involves no infringement of our sovereignty and no cession of our territory. We are indebted to the powers for their magnanimity. We condemn the stupidity of the rebels. Thinking of what has happened, we are filled with shame and indignation.[1]

What a shameless government! How could the imperialist powers forsake a government which was capable of making such statements?

The imperialists enticed the viceroys and governors in the southern and eastern provinces with the bait of a joint stand in suppressing the Chinese people. With the same stand they taught the bungling Qing government a lesson. The Chinese people, who did not yet have sufficient experience, revealed their naïveté in the Yi He Tuan movement. But although they were cheated, they came to see the true face of their enemies both at home and abroad, who were co-operating to suppress them with armed force. The Yi He Tuan movement sustained a tragic defeat, but the Chinese people learned a very useful lesson.

5. WHAT WAS PRESERVED BY THE PRINCIPLE OF "PRESERVATION OF SOVEREIGNTY"?

On January 28, 1901, the Qing court taking refuge in Xi'an, issued an imperial edict announcing its intention to introduce political reforms. It contained the following words:

> Now that peace negotiations are under way, drastic steps must be taken to carry out political reforms with a view to making the country strong and prosperous. We must correct our shortcomings by emulating the good points of foreign countries and guide ourselves in the future by the lessons drawn from our own failures in the past.[2]

The fugitive Qing court returned to Beijing in January 1902. The Empress Dowager and the Emperor travelled by train part of the

[1] *The Brief History of the Yi He Tuan* (in Chinese), Part one, Vol. 1, p. 23.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

way from Xi'an to the capital by way of Kaifeng. After their arrival in Beijing, they granted audiences to the foreign envoys and their wives, and expressed their regrets to them. All this was appreciated by the foreigners. By doing such a trifling thing as a journey by rail the Qing court indicated to its foreign masters its sincere desire to introduce "reforms" as the latter wished. The court had come back to its own capital, only as puppets.

The "reforms" that were introduced, however, brought no relief to the people. Court and provincial officials prepared lengthy reports, filled with empty words, on various reforms and innovations. But in reality, the "new measures" consisted of nothing but a few changes in the central government system, abolition of the old examination system, and removal of the ban on marriages between the Manchus and Hans. It could hardly be expected that empty words and minor changes would mitigate the dissatisfaction of the people or stem the tide of revolution. The Qing court therefore went on to proclaim that it would adopt a "constitution." In 1905, it sent high-ranking officials abroad to study the various systems of constitutional government, and in the following year announced its readiness to set up a constitutional government in China. The "Proposed Principles of the Constitution" were announced in 1908 and in the same year an imperial edict fixed a nine-year period to make the necessary preparations for the establishment of a constitutional government. In 1910, another edict shortened the preparatory period to three years. But the Revolution of 1911 broke out the very next year.

All the measures, from the announcement of reforms in the imperial edict of 1901 down to the preparation for a constitutional government, were designed as much to hoodwink the people as to win the favour of the imperialist powers. The Qing court knew that it could not ingratiate itself with the powers unless it strengthened its rule over the people. Therefore, it spared no effort to convince the imperialists that it was not only a loyal but also a capable servant. It said in effect: "Don't abandon us just because we are corrupt and impotent; we can still carry out some political reforms to consolidate our rule and to do what you expected of us."

It was in this vein that the Qing government appealed to the imperialist powers for an understanding after the Yi He Tuan Uprising of 1900. While seeming to brag about undertaking drastic political reforms "with a view to making the country strong and prosperous," the Qing court was humbly informing the foreigners that it would "do its utmost to seek the favour of the friendly powers." While talking about a constitutional government, it was serving the imperialists with more than ordinary obsequiousness. Such were the two sides of the policy of the Qing rulers: one supplementing the other.

The false gestures made by the Qing government to adopt a constitution did not ward off the revolution, but the imperialist powers were satisfied with them. Even after the Qing Dynasty had been overthrown, Frank J. Goodnow, American political adviser to Yuan Shikai, mourned its fate. He expressed the belief that things would have turned out much better if the Qing's plan to bring about a constitution had not been frustrated by the revolution. Goodnow also asserted that had the Qing Dynasty not been an alien rule which it had long been the wish of the Han people to overthrow, it would probably have been better to retain the dynasty in power and gradually to introduce constitutional government in accordance with the plans outlined by the commission appointed for this purpose. He further expressed the opinion that the hatred of alien rule made this impossible and the establishment of a republic seemed at the time of the overthrow of the Qing rule to be the only alternative available.[1] P. H. Kent, a British adviser to the Qing government, ascribed the failure of the establishment of a constitutional government to the death of the Empress Dowager. (She died shortly after the "Proposed Principles of the Constitution" were promulgated in 1908.)

In his book *The Passing of the Manchus*, Kent stressed the Empress Dowager's "sincere" desire to adopt a constitution, saying:

> Her Majesty Tzu Hsi was quite willing to go down in history as the originator of a social compact which should inaugurate a new era, wherein the people should be happy and prosperous and the country strong and secure in the blessings of peace.

[1] See Bai Jiao, *Yuan Shikai* (in Chinese), p. 171.

He further wrote: "It is probably that had the 'Old Buddha' lived, on the foundations which were thus laid would have been constructed the fabric of the modern state."[1]

The imperialists had always cherished hopes about a China which could never materialize. On the one hand, they wanted to see in China an autocratic government which could sell out China's national sovereignty to foreigners in defiance of the popular will. On the other, they wanted to see this government tolerated by the Chinese people, capable of putting the people in their places and of avoiding uprisings and revolutions which impaired their vested interests. It was with this in mind that they agreed to the Qing's plan to set up a constitutional regime which they thought would be an ideal form of government for "new China." If the Qing rulers kept themselves forever in power as a constitutional monarchy, the imperialist countries would forever remain masters of China. With such imperialist thinking, they could not understand why this "wonderful" plan had failed, and they tried to ascribe the failure to the fact that the ruling house was not of Han nationality, and even to the death of a single individual — the Empress Dowager Ci Xi. But, even if the emperor were of Han and not of Manchu nationality, such an autocratic and traitorous government — a superstructure of feudalism — could never have deceived the people by its clamour for constitutionalism. As to the Empress Dowager, the "Old Buddha" who eventually gained the favour of the imperialists, she was, in the eyes of the Chinese people, they very personification of viciousness, depravity and infamy of the worst sort.

The imperialists were indeed grieved at the passing of the Qing court, and they had every reason to be. Even before 1900, Kang Youwei had already said:

> Although China is nominally an independent country, its territory, railways, shipping, trade and banks are all under the control of its enemies who can grab whatever they like. The country is really no longer independent although outwardly it remains so.

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[1] P. H. Kent, *The Passing of the Manchus*, pp. 39 and 41.

This was even more true of the situation after 1900 — during the last decade of the Qing regime. This is amply illustrated by the growing power of the imperialist-controlled customs and by the loans extended to China for the construction of railways.

By 1859 the foreigners had gained control of the entire Chinese customs administration. According to the "Protocol of 1901," China had to pay an indemnity of 450 million taels of silver (with accrued interest the sum exceeded 980 million taels payable within a period of 39 years). In addition to their grip on the Chinese Maritime Customs, the Protocol gave them control over the so-called "native customs" which levied taxes on local goods only. It stipulated that the indemnity payments were to be guaranteed by customs revenues as well as by the revenues of the so-called "native customs" at each open port and that the Inspector General of the Customs assume direct control of the payments. The authority of the Inspector General became more extensive: he collected duties on the one hand and paid indemnities to foreign countries on the other. The remaining portion of the revenues was turned over to the Chinese government.

At the beginning of the Yi He Tuan Uprising, a Censor of the Qing court, strongly warning against any act that might provoke the imperialist countries, memorialized the emperor as follows: "Since customs collections constitute the chief source of government revenue, we shall be in sore straits financially if peaceful relations with the foreigners are disrupted." Being at the complete mercy of the imperialists in matters of finance, the Qing government had to be content with picking up crumbs from their table.

Before the invasion of China by the joint forces of the eight powers in 1900, the imperialists had already arrogated to themselves the right to build railways in the so-called spheres of influence which they had marked out on Chinese soil. Now they began feverishly to build these lines.

Railways built by the foreigners before 1900 were financed with their own capital and operated under their direct management. These included the Chinese Eastern Railway built by Russia, the Yunnan-Tongking (Vietnam) Railway built by France, and the

Jiaozhou-Jinan Railway built by Germany. The Beijing-Shenyang Railway was the only line built by China itself with a British loan.

After 1900 the foreign powers began to extend railway loans to the Qing government, appointing their own men to supervise the management of the lines. The Beijing-Hankou Railway, Tianjin-Pukou Railway, Zhengding-Taiyuan Railway, Daokou-Qinghua Railway, Kaifeng-Luoyang Railway, Shanghai-Nanjing Railway, Shanghai-Hangzhou-Ningbo Railway and Guangzhou-Kowloon Railway were built with such loans. Vying for the right to build railways by extending loans to China, the imperialist powers were once again locked in keen competition, which culminated in the fight for the right to build a Sichuan-Hankou-Guangzhou line. In 1911, Britain, the United States, Germany and France finally reached agreement, and a consortium of the four countries granted the Qing government a loan of six million pounds. The right to construct this projected line went to the four powers.

In this connection we might mention some facts about direct investments made in China by various imperialist powers. The Treaty of Shimonoseki imposed by Japan on China in 1895 was the first of its kind to lay down specifically the rights of Japanese nationals, opening all treaty ports "to the trade, residence, industries and manufactures of Japanese subjects." In 1898, Germany was the first to seize mining concessions in areas along the Jiaozhou-Jinan Railway. Following this, the other foreign powers also rushed in to make direct investments in industrial and mining enterprises in China.

Before the Sino-Japanese War foreign banks, among them the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, and the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (both British) and others, had long been active in China. After that war the Yokohama Specie Bank (Japanese), the Deutsch Asiatische Bank (German), the Banque de l'Indo-Chine (French) and the Russo-Chinese Bank all became the major agents of aggression against China for the countries that owned them. After 1900, these banks set up many branches to expand their business activities. At about the same time, branches of the National City Bank of New York, the Banque Sino-Belge and

the Netherlands Trading Society were also established in China. By the last decade of the Qing rule, foreign imperialists had assumed full control over China's industry, mining and communications, depriving national capital of any possibility of development. The imperialist banks had monopolized the finances of the country, taking China's destiny into their firm grip.

During these ten years the Qing government existed entirely on the "charity" of the imperialist powers, from whom it received a portion of the customs collections and various loans. These foreign loans enabled the Qing government to cover its military and administrative expenses. It is difficult indeed to see how it could have kept its head above water without them. In an effort to win the favour of its foreign masters, it readily surrendered China's rights with regard to railways, mines, postal administration, navigation and so on. Thus the foreign diplomatic missions in the Legation Quarter of Beijing made themselves the super-government of China, and the foreign banks, which towered arrogantly on the Shanghai Bund (waterfront), became China's overlords.

During this period the struggle between the imperialists, open and clandestine, for the upper hand in the plunder of China grew still more acute. Rivalry over privileges and interests in China's Northeast led to a war between Russia and Japan in 1904. Having emerged victorious from the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and defeated Russia in 1905, Japan became an influential factor in international relations in the Far East. Britain's current policy in the Far East was to draw Japan to its side. Thus, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was concluded in 1902 and then renewed in 1905 in light of the changed situation brought about by the Russo-Japanese War.

The United States, however, soon saw that its interests were in conflict with those of Japan. It advocated the "open door policy," and jockeyed for a leading position in the settlement of the Yi He Tuan Uprising of 1900, for it always had in mind the expansion of its interests in China. The United States was resigned to the defeat of Russia by Japan, but it sought after the role of mediator in the peace talks. In doing this, it was prompted by no other desire

than to extend its own influence and to seize the position vacated by vanquished Russia. At the end of the war, therefore, the United States approached Japan with an offer to buy the South Manchurian Railway ceded to Japan by Russia. The United States also hoped to buy the Chinese Eastern Railway from Russia in order to establish a big trunk line, linking Japan with European Russia through China's Northeast and Siberia. The cunning Japanese rulers at first agreed to the sale of the South Manchurian Railway. Shortly afterwards, however, they not only broke their promise but also allied with Russia against the United States. Thwarted in their ambitious schemes, the American capitalists took their setback much to heart. The rapid growth of Japanese influence in the Northeast made them particularly envious. From that time on, the contradictions between Japan and the United States became the key factor in the international relations of China.

After the Russo-Japanese War, Japan strove to consolidate its position in the Far East. Apart from maintaining an alliance with Britain, it gradually sought a rapprochement with tsarist Russia and to be on good terms with France, an ally of Russia. This resulted in the signing of a Franco-Japanese Agreement in June 1907 and of a Russo-Japanese Agreement in July of the same year. Both agreements contained secret clauses recognizing the special interests of each of the contracting parties in certain specified areas in China. By this time, relations between Japan and the United States had become so strained that a clash between them over China appeared imminent. Tension was somewhat eased however in November 1908, when these two countries signed the Root-Takahira Agreement.

The United States. however, had no intention of giving up its effort to gain a foothold in China's Northeast. After much active manoeuvring, Willard Straight, United States Consul-General in Shenyang, succeeded in October 1909 in reaching an agreement with the Qing viceroy of the three northeastern provinces on the construction of a railway between Jinzhou and Aihui with American and British capital. In November and December of that year, U.S. Secretary of State Philander C. Knox submitted to the powers a plan

on the "neutralization of Manchurian railways," which purported to put all railways and railway investments in the Northeast under the joint control of the powers. With this plan the United States intended to gain for its capitalists a predominant position in this area. But the plan met with strong opposition from both Japan and tsarist Russia, which were firmly entrenched there: the former in the southern part and the latter in the northern. In the circumstances, the United States was forced to abandon not only this plan but also the financing of the construction of the proposed Jinzhou-Aihui Railway.

In 1910, the United States in conjunction with Britain, France and Germany, formed the Four-Power Consortium for the purpose of investing in the construction of a Sichuan-Hankou-Guangzhou line. In April 1911, the Consortium agreed to make a loan to the Qing government for "currency reform" and "industrial development," the latter meaning the building of industrial enterprises in the Northeast. The Qing government gave extensive privileges to the Consortium, in which the United States played the leading role. The loan agreement stipulated that the Consortium would be given priority whenever the Chinese government solicited foreign loans for the industrial development of the Northeast. This step appeared to satisfy the ambitions of the American imperialists — but it came too late. The Revolution of 1911 broke out in China soon after the agreement was signed, just as the imperialists' ambitious schemes were about to be put into operation.

It is clear that although the imperialist powers continued to clash over their interests in China after 1900 even to the extent of a war between Russia and Japan and to loud sabre-rattling between Japan and the United States, they eventually came to an agreement and concerted their actions for the obvious purpose of swallowing up China. As stated in the preceding section, the settlement of the conflict arising from Yi He Tuan Uprising of 1900 was governed by the principles of the "open door," and of "equal opportunity" as propounded by the United States and concretely laid down in the Anglo-German Agreement. These principles were invariably embodied in all later agreements and treaties entered into between

the imperialist powers on matters concerning China. The Anglo-Japanese Agreement of 1905 stipulated:

> . . . the preservation of the common interests of all the Powers in China by insuring the independence and integrity of the Chinese Empire and the principle of equal opportunities for the commerce and industry of all nations in China.

Similar clauses also appeared in both the Franco-Japanese and the Russo-Japanese agreements concluded in 1907. The Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908 put it even more explicitly:

> They (the U.S. and Japan — *H.S.*) are also determined to preserve the common interest of all powers in China by supporting by all pacific means at their disposal the independence and integrity of China and the principle of equal opportunity for commerce and industry of all nations in that Empire.
>
> Should any event occur threatening the status quo as above described or the principle of equal opportunity as above defined, it remains for the two Governments to communicate with each other in order to arrive at an understanding as to what measures they may consider it useful to take.

The clauses quoted above make the real meaning of the "open door policy" crystal clear. Japan, which had already seized a vantage point for further aggression against China, continuously harped on ensuring China's independence and integrity merely as a smoke-screen to cloak its attempts to swallow China alone. The United States, being financially powerful, insisted on the principle of equal opportunity in order gradually to gain for itself a dominant position in all arrangements for joint investments in China and thus establish its hegemony in that country.

The United States made ostentatious use of the "open door" principle as a justification for practically all its actions in China. For instance, when proposing the "neutralization of Manchurian railways" in 1909, it explained in a note to Britain that the plan called for the interested powers to furnish funds for the construction and administration of the railways in this area and that the ownership of the railways would be vested in China. The purpose was described as being "to protect the policy of the open door and equal opportunity in Manchuria . . . and to assure China unimpaired

sovereignty. . . ."[1] It would appear from this that the "open door policy" of the United States was to let China enjoy nominal sovereignty. In fact, however, it meant joint investment and control by the foreign powers with the United States occupying a predominant position, and to eventually secure sole control of China.

Not a few people in those days thought that the powers had shifted from the principle of partition to that of "preservation" in their policy towards China. The word "preservation" is not entirely amiss: The point is, to "preserve" what. Naturally the powers did not seek to preserve the genuine independence and real sovereignty of China. They wanted only to preserve the nominal "independence" of China and to maintain the thoroughly rotten and traitorous Qing government as its ruler. Therefore, even the *Xin Min Cong Bao*, organ of the constitutional monarchists, said in an editorial on the Franco-Japanese Agreement of 1907:

> The powers pretend that they are espousing the principle of preserving China's territorial integrity and maintaining equal opportunity for trade. But, to make a long story short, they only aim at maintaining the status quo in Eastern Asia. Those countries which have already gained a firm foothold in Eastern Asia are seeking to uphold their position and those whose foothold is still weak are striving to consolidate their position. . . . They all want to satisfy their ambitions to nibble at China and swallow it by taking advantage of the backwardness of the country.[2]

These remarks were in the main correct. But the constitutional monarchists did not understand that the "backwardness" utilized by the imperialist powers was really the result of the feudal, autocratic Qing rule. Like the reformists of the "Hundred-Day Reform" of 1898, they still cherished the hope that the Qing government would reform itself once the danger was pointed out to it. As a matter of fact, it was precisely because they were aware of the nature of the principle of "preservation" adopted by the powers that the Qing rulers considered their rule quite stable. They felt they no longer need fear foreign invasion, and they saw no reason to worry.

It is perfectly clear that the imperialist powers were willing to

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[1] See Li Xianglin, *Open-door Policy and China* (in Chinese), p. 168.

[2] See *Xin Min Cong Bao* (in Chinese), Vol. 4, No. 22, p. 14.

preserve and support the Qing government because the latter served them so loyally. It was only natural for the imperialist masters to adopt the principle of "preservation" as a reward to the Qing government for its pro-foreign attitude.

Under such a government, they were willing to permit China's nominal independence and this, to a certain degree, would provide the conditions for the imperialist powers to iron out their contradictions and conflicts. Moreover, such a situation would deceive the Chinese people into believing that China was still a sovereign state. Therefore, in the eyes of the powers, such a government in China was indispensable. And they thought it would be good if this government donned the garb of "constitutionalism" to win the confidence and support of the Chinese people, keeping them blind to the fact that the real masters of China were the imperialists.

6. PATRIOTISM AND REVOLUTION

After the Yi He Tuan struggle of 1900 the revolutionary movement of the Chinese bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie began gradually to expand. After 1905 the bourgeois revolutionary movement experienced an upsurge.

Before 1900, the political demands and aspirations of the Chinese bourgeoisie found expression only in reformist activities. The reformists pinned their hopes on the forces of feudalism and imperialism which, they thought, would make concessions voluntarily. They tried to find support among feudal and imperialist forces to back up their reformist policies. They were against the peasant revolution. As for the Yi He Tuan movement — a movement of the masses against imperialism — it could only take the crude and simple form of a peasant revolt. It was furthermore led astray by the false garb of nationalism assumed by the ruling class and so finally sustained defeat.

Although Sun Yat-sen set up the Xing Zhong Hui (Society for the Revival of China) in Honolulu as early as 1894, it was then a very small organization and exercised little influence. It had no

definite programme for a democratic revolution. In 1900, its leaders even attempted to establish a new regime in co-operation with Li Hongzhang, Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi, and asked Britain to help them establish contact with Li for this purpose. In short, there was no revolutionary movement led by the bourgeoisie before 1900. It was only after 1900 that the popular patriotic movement against imperialist aggression which embraced, among other classes, the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie began to gain momentum. Bourgeois and petty-bourgeois patriots leaned gradually towards the revolutionary movement aimed at overthrowing the Qing rule. Having gradually disassociated themselves from the bourgeois reformists, the bourgeois revolutionaries became the rallying point for all the patriotic and progressive people in the country.

The growth of the bourgeois revolutionary movement was closely related to the intensification of imperialist aggression and oppression in China. After 1900, while the feudal rulers clung unashamedly to the backing of the imperialists, the deteriorating social and economic situation of Chinese society brought suffering to people in all walks of life. Zhang Qian wrote in 1904 on the financial condition of China:

> Since the incident of 1900 the amount of indemnities to foreign powers has increased enormously. The payment of indemnities and the expenditure on the training of the army and police, bandit suppression and education cost the country more than 20,000,000 taels of silver every year. When the court and provincial officials could find no way to meet these expenses, they memorialized the court to allow the people to purchase government posts. When this was found insufficient, they suggested a special tax to be levied on opium and houses. As this was still not enough, the proceeds of the local surtax on tribute rice in 30 counties were ordered to be sent to the national treasury. Indeed, no stone was left unturned to raise funds. In the past two years, whenever the date for the payment of indemnities was due, business circles in Shanghai were greatly disturbed and money interest reached a new high. The very unfavourable balance of payments accounted for the particularly stringent financial situation. We have hardly paid one-tenth of the indemnities, yet we are now in great financial straits. It is hard to say what will befall us if this state of affairs is allowed to continue.[1]

[1] Zhang Qian, *Nine Series of Essays* (in Chinese), Vol. 3, p. 3.

This describes how the Qing government tried every means to grab money in order to pay indemnities to the imperialists. The impact on urban economy was so great that even the bourgeoisie found it unbearable, not to speak of the broad mass of the working people.

By this time the number of young people going abroad to study had increased greatly. Before 1900, there were only a few hundred Chinese students in Japan. In the years following 1901 their number multiplied tenfold. Chinese students in Europe and America also increased. Most of these students tended to be revolutionaries. All this showed that the petty-bourgeois intellectuals realized that they had no future in Chinese society as it then was.

It was in these circumstances that the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements began gradually to be swept into the patriotic and the revolutionary movement.

Not all those who joined the bourgeois patriotic movement were democratic revolutionaries. Among them there were also reformists — the constitutional monarchists.

In the few years immediately following 1900 there were some bourgeois and petty-bourgeois gatherings and organizations in Shanghai for the purpose of carrying on patriotic activities. But many of the members had no stomach for revolution.

Movements against Russia and France were launched in China in 1903. Having occupied China's Northeast, Russia, on various pretexts, refused to withdraw its troops. In April of 1903, it had reached an agreement with the Qing government. A mass meeting was held at Zhangyuan Garden in Shanghai to protest against the agreement. The speakers stressed that the people of the whole country would never accept it. Chinese students in Japan also joined the movement. At the same time, Wang Zhichun, Governor of Guangxi Province, appealed to the French troops stationed in Indo-China to help him suppress a people's uprising in Guangxi Province, promising to grant France exclusive rights of railway and mining development in that province after the uprising was suppressed. This too led to strong popular protests in various parts of the coun-

try, where the people put forward the slogan "Down with Wang Zhichun!"

Although not everyone taking part in the patriotic movement favoured revolution, the Qing rulers condemned all as "revolutionaries." For instance, Cai Jun, the Qing Minister to Japan, telegraphed the Beijing government:

> Chinese students in Tokyo have organized volunteer units nominally to resist Russia but in reality to start a revolution. They have already left for China. The government is requested to instruct the local authorities to carry out strict searches and to arrest them without delay.[1]

The Qing court immediately issued the following secret order to all governors:

> According to a memorial submitted some time ago by the Censor, Chinese students in Tokyo have all turned revolutionaries and precautionary measures should be taken.... Even though they may be prompted by a sense of patriotism, we are afraid that, with the Yi He Tuan Uprising just recently over, their activities will complicate our relations with friendly powers. It is our opinion that since the students are rebelling against the court, the court cannot tolerate them. . . . The governors of all the provinces are ordered to arrest and execute on the spot those students who are suspicious characters and found to be entertaining revolutionary ideas. . . .[2]

In a letter to Enshou, Governor of Jiangsu Province, Lu Haihuan, then negotiator for commercial treaties, wrote:

> In the foreign settlements of Shanghai, there are many so-called young enthusiasts who, it is reported, call mass meetings at Zhangyuan Garden. Outwardly, they are anti-French and anti-Russian but in reality they are plotting revolts. You are requested secretly to arrest the ringleaders and to punish them heavily.[3]

In 1905, a widespread boycott of U.S. goods started in China to protest against the organized racial discrimination and persecution to which Chinese workers were subjected in the United States. When the facts about such discrimination became known to the Chinese people, they stimulated a feeling of deep hatred for

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[1] *History of the Revolution and National Reconstruction of the Republic of China* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 100.

[2] Feng Ziyou, *Stories of the Revolution* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 105.

[3] *History of the Revolution and National Reconstruction of the Republic of China* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 105.

U.S. imperialists. Chinese businessmen in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Amoy, Fuzhou, Tianjin and Nuzhuang started a simultaneous boycott of U.S. goods. This was the first boycott of its kind in the history of China.

The United States government lodged a strong protest with the Qing government and staged naval demonstrations. It was not long before the Qing government issued a strict order prohibiting the boycott, a weapon used by the Chinese people for the first time as an expression of their anti-imperialist sentiments. The boycott also revealed that Chinese industrialists and businessmen in many cities were beginning to take part in patriotic political movements.

An even sharper struggle flared up on the issues of mining and railway construction right. In their opposition to foreign control over the mines and railways in various parts of the country, it was only natural for the people to fight directly against the traitorous policy of the Qing government. The Qing rulers began to sell out mining and railway rights before 1900. But it was only after the events of 1900 that the people voiced their protests on a nation-wide scale.

After 1900 the sale of the Kaiping collieries in Zhili (Hebei) Province to the British through the mediation of G. Detring, Commissioner of Customs at Tianjin, led to a strong protest by the people of Zhili. The people of Yunnan Province also protested against the sale to foreign interests of mines in seven counties in Yunnan, while the people of Shandong protested against the sale of the gold mines at Yishui in that province. These protests eventually forced the Qing government to redeem many of these mines.

The granting of railway construction rights led to an even greater storm. In 1903, the Qing rulers promulgated "Railway Regulations" which permitted Chinese businessmen to build railways. The right of building the Guangzhou-Hankou Railway, which had already been granted to the United States, was redeemed and a private Chinese company was formed to build the railway with capital collected from among the Chinese people. Another company, the Sichuan-Hankou Railway Company, was set up for the same purpose in Sichuan. These companies, however, were private only in name.

In reality, they were under the control of provincial officials who extorted money from the people by selling railway shares. When the greater part of the money had been collected, these officials appropriated it for other uses and never seriously began to build the railways, thus arousing anger among the people. Furthermore, having collected quite a big sum, the officials approached foreign governments for more railway loan. Popular indignation then reached a new high.

In 1910, the Qing authorities finally negotiated a loan with the Four-Power Consortium for the construction of the Sichuan-Hankou-Guangzhou line, liquidating the railway companies already set up in various provinces. This time, the Qing authorities called their policy "nationalizing the railways," but the people saw through this "nationalization" and regarded it as nothing but a sell-out of the country's railways to foreign powers. The struggle against it was most severe in Sichuan where students and businessmen went on strike and people staged demonstrations and submitted petitions to the government. A delegation organized by scholars and gentry set out for Beijing to appeal to the court. The rural people of the lower strata in some places rallied together and resisted the government troops. An armed uprising was imminent.

As the imperialists had become masters over China more openly and the Qing government had completely become a tool of the imperialist powers, the patriotic movement against imperialist aggression was bound to develop into a democratic revolution to overthrow the Qing government. Part of the upper-strata bourgeoisie, especially those who had close ties with the feudal forces, could not go beyond advocating a constitutional monarchy, but many overseas Chinese capitalists began to extend their support to the democratic revolutionary movement, and the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, especially the petty-bourgeois intellectuals in the country, joined this movement in large numbers.

The Tong Meng Hui (the Chinese Revolutionary League) was set up under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen in 1905 and provided the rising revolutionary movement with a unified organization. Its

programme aimed at the overthrow of the Qing government and the establishment of a democratic republic. Opposition to foreign imperialism, however, was not clearly stated in the programme. In fact, the leaders of the Tong Meng Hui cherished some illusion about imperialism, believing that the imperialist powers might be sympathetic to them and would at least allow China to reform itself along bourgeois democratic lines. Herein lies one of the fatal weaknesses of the revolutionary movement led by the Tong Meng Hui. There is, however, an important difference between the bourgeois revolutionaries represented by the Tong Meng Hui and the constitutional monarchist reformers. The latter, fearing that the imperialist powers might interfere with the revolution, preferred to preserve the Qing government supported by the imperialists, while the former set themselves the task of overthrowing the Qing government.

The revolutionaries were not completely blind to the fact that the Qing government had become an out-and-out tool of the imperialists and that the foreign imperialists were the real masters of China. This was most clearly explained in a pamphlet by the popular propagandist Chen Tianhua. He said:

> Gentlemen, can you say the Qing government is still the government of China? It has long been turned over to foreign countries. Our rights in matters of finance, railways and the appointment of government officials have long been surrendered to foreigners. To get all this the foreigners did not have to exert any efforts. Whenever they need anything, all they have to do is to give an order for the Qing government to carry it out immediately. . . . The Qing government is convinced that it is better to give away the country to foreign friends than to its own slaves. And you may talk until your voice is hoarse, but it will pay no attention to you.[1]

He said elsewhere:

> . . . Just look what the court has been doing lately. Is there anything it has not done on instructions from foreigners? It is obvious enough that we oppose foreigners, but the Qing court does not think so. Instead, it asserts that we oppose the court and tries to execute us as rebels. Gentlemen, we must understand clearly that we cannot rely on the government; for no matter what you say about your unwillingness to be slaves of foreigners, you are already slaves, even though you may not

[1] See *History of the 1911 Revolution in Wuchang* (in Chinese), p. 78.

want to believe it. True, the people should not be disloyal to the government, but does that mean that we should not overthrow one controlled by foreigners?[1]

Chen Tianhua's pamphlet was written in 1903. He pointed out clearly that "His Majesty's court" was virtually a "foreigners' court." The facts he so plainly described could not but stir the great patriotic movement which directed its spearhead against the autocratic regime. It is against such a background that the 1911 Revolution broke out, putting an end to the 270-year-old Qing rule.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Chapter IV

THE "STRONG MAN" (Part One: 1911-1916)

1. LACK OF VIGILANCE TOWARDS IMPERIALIST PLOTS

The outbreak of the 1911 Revolution demonstrated that the destiny of China was beyond the control of the imperialists, much as the latter believed they had the country at their mercy.

The imperialists had not expected the forces of the revolution to overthrow the Qing government at one stroke. Six months before this event, the Four-Power Consortium (composed of the U.S., Britain, Germany and (France) granted the Qing government a loan of £10,000,000 for "currency reform and the industrial development of China." An agreement covering another loan of £6,000,000 to finance the construction of the Sichuan-Hankou-Guangzhou line, was signed five months before the revolution. This loan gave rise to a widespread protest movement in the provinces of Sichuan, Hubei and Hunan to safeguard railway rights there. (The Qing government, under the pretext of nationalizing railways, was actually selling them out to the foreigners.) The imperialists, however, thought that since the Taiping movement which stirred and swept the country had been defeated five decades earlier with the help of Gordon's army, and the Yi He Tuan Uprising had been suppressed by armed force and deft diplomatic manoeuvres ten years earlier, no power could halt foreign imperialism in China.

The imperialists were never able to appraise correctly the growth of the political consciousness and revolutionary strength of the Chinese people. They did not see that 1911 was entirely different from 1860 or 1900. The movement to protect railway rights heralded the Wuchang Uprising of October 10, 1911. In the weeks

that followed this uprising, one province after another proclaimed its independence from the Qing government. The Qing rulers no longer felt secure in the saddle, the Chinese people were no longer willing to tolerate their autocratic rule. The imperialists needed this government, but the people would not put up with such a traitorous, feudal and autocratic regime. So the defeat of the Qing rulers by the people meant the defeat of the imperialists who had backed the Qing government.

In 1911, the Chinese people, although their political consciousness had risen to unprecedented heights, were still going through the initial stage of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. The people were not yet tried and tested in the struggle for liberation, nor did they possess strong leadership. Nonetheless, the revolution unfolded with lightning speed. The imperialists neither expected to be faced with such a situation, nor had the experience to cope with it. The people and even the leaders of the revolution were also far from experienced. It should be noted that the people at that time had even less experience than the imperialists, for the latter, though facing such a situation in China for the first time, were past masters in hoodwinking the people, an art they had learned in their rule at home and their exploitation of the colonial countries. Although the revolution shocked and shook them at first, they soon realized that both the leaders of the Chinese revolution and the Chinese people were naive and easy to deceive. So they concocted a treacherous plot and launched a counter-attack against the Chinese people.

The bourgeois-democratic revolutionaries headed by Sun Yat-sen had done much to pave the way for the 1911 Revolution. But their many weaknesses soon became apparent.

Firstly, they made no serious efforts to distinguish themselves from the constitutional monarchists who had come to the revolutionary camp before 1911. After the revolution, they joined it in large numbers and took the leadership into their hands. When the revolution was at a high tide, they claimed that they too wanted to overthrow the Qing rule and establish a democratic republic. Ac-

tually, however, they were trying their best to narrow down the scope of the revolution to the mere abdication of the Qing Emperor.

Secondly, although the people and the leaders of the revolution realized that the Qing regime was traitorous and therefore should be overthrown, they harboured the illusion that once their government, the servile tool of the imperialists, had collapsed, the latter, deprived of their instrument, could do little against China. Concentrating all their strength for an attack upon the Qing regime, they naively took no precautions against the imperialists. When the imperialists hinted at their willingness to stop supporting the Qing rulers, the leaders of the Chinese revolution even fell into the illusion that the imperialists really meant to be their friends. This illusion was very much in evidence particularly after the constitutional monarchists, led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, wormed their way into the revolutionary camp. As far back as the reform movement of 1898, Liang Qichao had expressed the hope that the imperialists would help China towards progress and reform (see Chapter III, Section 2). The constitutional monarchists brought their illusions about imperialism into the revolutionary ranks, and the revolutionaries themselves lacked proper understanding of the aggressive policy of imperialism. This was one of the most serious weaknesses of the 1911 Revolution.

When Sun Yat-sen organized the Tong Meng Hui in Japan in 1905, six years before the revolution, he drew up the "Revolutionary Programme of the Tong Meng Hui" which contained a "Manifesto to the World" to be issued by the "military government" after the outbreak of the revolution. The full text follows:

> The National Army of China has been ordered to liquidate the despotic Qing government and to establish a republic. Every effort will be made to strengthen good neighbourly relations with all friendly countries. In order to maintain peace in the world and to promote the welfare of mankind, the National Army of China in its actions towards foreigners will be guided by the following principles:
>
> 1. All past treaties entered into by the Qing government with other countries will remain in force.
> 2. All indemnities and foreign loans will be acknowledged without any alteration of terms and will be paid in full by the customs in various provinces.
> 3. All privileges now enjoyed by foreigners will be respected.

4. Foreign property in cities under the jurisdiction of the military government will be protected.
5. All treaties entered into, all concessions granted and all loans incurred by the Qing government after the promulgation of this Manifesto will not be acknowledged.
6. All foreigners rendering assistance to the Qing government to the detriment of the interests of the National Military Government will be regarded as enemies.
7. All materials supplied by foreigners to the Qing government which may be used for war will be confiscated.[1]

From this it may be seen that the anti-imperialist idea of "abolishing unequal treaties," which Sun Yat-sen formed and put forth in clear terms at the end of his life with the assistance of the party of the proletariat, still had no place in his mind at that time. The foreign policy of the revolutionaries was based on the fear that, should the imperialists intervene, the Chinese revolution might suffer a defeat like that of the Taiping movement. They did not see that, once the Chinese people were fully mobilized, they had nothing to fear from the imperialists. They did not realize that to compromise with the imperialists and appease them would doom the revolution to failure. It might fail differently from the way the Taiping movement had failed, but it would fail just the same.

During the Wuchang Uprising, constitutional monarchists like Tang Hualong grabbed leading positions in the Wuchang military government that was set up. At their request, Li Yuanhong, a former warlord-bureaucrat under the Qing government, was made commander-in-chief. A somewhat similar alignment of political forces developed in other provinces after they had declared their independence. As a result, the policy of appeasement towards imperialism was immediately accepted and put into practice at all points. On October 13,1911, three days after the Wuchang Uprising, the Wuchang military government sent notes to the local foreign consulates. In content, these notes were the same as the Manifesto of the Tong Meng Hui, except for minor changes in wording which included the following addition:

[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), edited by Huang Jilu, Vol. 1, pp. 16-17.

> From the seven articles above the friendly powers will see that our military action is just and that it is by no means anti-foreign in character. It will be appreciated if the consulate forwards this note to its government.[1]

A similar attitude was adopted by the provincial governments that had declared their independence of the Qing government. On November 16, provincial delegates, meeting in Shanghai, established a provisional central government and appointed Wu Tingfang and Wen Zongyao as their diplomatic representatives. On the next day, Wu Tingfang, once a Qing envoy to the United States, issued a Manifesto to the World. Apart from enumerating the crimes committed by the Qing government, the Manifesto had this to say with regard to the history of Sino-foreign relations:

> The foreign powers individually and collectively have stood hammering at the door of China for centuries pleading for the diffusion of knowledge, a reformation of national services, the adoption of western sciences and industrial processes, a jettisoning of the crude, out-of-date and ignoble concepts which have multiplied to keep the nation without the pale of the great family constituting the civilized world, they (the foreign powers — *H.S.*) have failed.

Referring to the policy of the revolutionary government, the Manifesto said:

> We have, in short, taken every possible step to protect vested interests, safeguard international obligations, secure continuance of commerce, and shield education and religious institutions; and, what is even more important, striven continually to maintain law and order, sustain peace, and promote a constructive policy upon sound and enduring grounds.[2]

It is indeed queer that such utterances should have been made when the revolutionary war was still in progress and when the Qing government in Beijing was struggling to maintain its tottering regime. Here we should examine how international obligations were "observed" in various provinces that had proclaimed their independence. The collection of customs revenues provides a good illustration.

As we know, a major part of the customs revenues was disbursed directly by the Qing government for payment of foreign loans

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[1] Zhang Zhongfu, *A History of China's Foreign Relations* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 25.

[2] Kent, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-212.

and indemnities. When the revolutionary banner was raised in the coastal cities after the outbreak of the revolution, the foreign commissioners of customs in these ports immediately assumed control of all customs revenues on the pretext that they wanted to ensure payments to foreign countries. F. A. Aglen, the then Inspector General of Customs, wrote in a memorandum:

> Very little difficulty was experienced in establishing control, and it speaks well for the patriotic feelings of the revolutionary leaders and their sense of national obligation that scarcely any attempt was made to interfere with the customs collections at a time when command of ready money for fighting purposes was of vital importance . . . it must be remembered that the Inspector General was the official subordinate of the imperial government and at the northern ports where that government still retained control, the very considerable revenue that he and his commissioners were instrumental in collecting continued to flow unchecked into the imperial coffers. . . .[1]

This was the situation which prevailed two months after the outbreak of the 1911 Revolution. It showed that the foreign commissioners of customs in the northern ports continued to collect customs revenues in co-operation with the Qing government, while the commissioners in the southern revolutionary areas kept the revenues in their own hands. The revolutionary government not only did not lodge any protest; it was quite happy that the foreign commissioners in the South did not hand over the revenues to the Qing government. In December, the legations in Beijing submitted a demand to the Qing government that all the customs revenues in the North be put under the control of the commissioners. The tottering Qing regime readily acceded to this demand. Aglen commented in his memorandum:

> The suggestion was immediately complied with — a proof that the imperial authorities were in no way behind the revolutionary leaders in their desire to do what was right and proper for the maintenance of national credit.[2]

Tus the imperialists praised both the Qing government and the "revolutionary leaders" in the same breath. Could anything be more insulting to the revolutionary Chinese people?

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[1] Morse, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 402.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 403.

At the outset of the 1911 Revolution, the imperialists were far from giving up any idea of furnishing the Qing government with military aid. For instance, John Jordan, the British Minister in Beijing, wrote to his home government on October 16:

> ... the Viceroy, who had taken refuge on a Chinese cruiser which was anchored close to a British gun-boat, had notified the consuls that he was unable to protect foreigners, and had asked the assistance of His Majesty's ships in preventing the mutinous troops from crossing the river. On the receipt of this news I at once asked the naval commander-in-chief to send all available assistance to Hankow, and his Excellency readily responded to the request.[1]

But by now the foreign powers were unable to carry out effective armed intervention in the Chinese revolution. In the first place, they were already enmeshed in the conflicts and antagonisms which preceded World War I. Secondly, the rapid development of the Chinese revolution made the imperialists realize that it would be unwise to stand openly by the Qing government. On October 18, the consular body in Hankou issued a declaration of neutrality. Pointing out that a war was going on between the Chinese government and the Chinese popular forces, the declaration stressed that, according to international law, a civil war was a domestic affair. Foreigners residing in a country where a civil war was going on had no right to interfere and should observe strict neutrality, the declaration went on, adding that they should not give shelter to officials of either side or assist them. The declaration emphasized the necessity of the consul observing neutrality. In conclusion, the declaration said that in accordance with the regulations obtained in the concessions, no armed person should be allowed to stay in the concessions and that hiding weapons and explosives in the concessions was forbidden.

There was a twofold reason why the powers then charted a wait-and-see policy of neutrality.

In the first place, the powers became disappointed with the Qing rulers when they saw that they were at a complete loss as to how to cope with the revolution. As Jordan put it in his report:

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[1] MacNair, *op. cit.*, p. 700.

> The general opinion is that the present revolt will be suppressed, but the prospect which faces the Manchu dynasty is a gloomy one. It is largely discredited amongst its own people. . . .[1]

In other words, he thought the revolution would fail, but did not consider it worthwhile to support the Qing government.

Secondly, the powers considered that the attitude of the revolutionaries was such that it gave them no cause for alarm. Jordan reported:

> The rebel generalissimo, Li Yuan-hung, is reported to be a man of considerable intelligence, who speaks English and has had some experience abroad. He has notified the consuls in Hankow that he has constituted a Government which will respect existing treaties and engagements with foreign Powers, and will guarantee efficient protection to all foreigners so long as they refrain from rendering assistance to the Manchu Government.[2]

Jordan's report was written three days before the consuls at Hankou declared neutrality and served to show the state of mind of the foreigners at the time. The declaration of neutrality, although it was merely a local announcement and couched in ambiguous terms, further deepened the illusions in the revolutionary camp about the imperialists.

On October 14, 1911 the Qing government asked Yuan Shikai to resume office under the imperial court. On October 27, agreeing to his conditions, it appointed him imperial commissioner in command of the armies. On November 2, Yuan was appointed prime minister, and on the following day he arrived in Beijing to form his cabinet. The political and military power of the Qing government thus passed into the hands of Yuan Shikai.

By that time, eight provinces had been taken over by the revolutionary forces and the formation of a provisional central government was under way. With Yuan Shikai emerging as the central figure in the situation, the imperialists began more and more to play the tune of "neutrality," thinking this was the best cloak for the nefarious tricks they were planning. Yuan's forces gained ground

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 701-702.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 701.

in the Wuhan area, occupying Hankou and then, on November 27, taking Hanyang — and menacing Wuchang. Yuan Shikai realized that it was impossible at that moment to put an end to the revolutionary situation by armed force. He also realized that he could take advantage of the opportunities presented by the revolutionary situation. Under the circumstances, he was inclined to stop the fighting. On December 1, a three-day armistice was arranged, through the British consul, between Yuan Shikai and the Wuchang military government. The armistice, when it drew to a close, was extended for another 15 days. Hostilities after this were generally halted, and representatives were appointed by the two sides to start negotiations.

The constitutional monarchists who were entrenched in the revolutionary camp were of course pleased with such a situation. And the revolutionaries, with inadequate experience and lacking a grasp of the situation, did not see that the course of events was developing dangerously for them. They thought themselves extremely fortunate that the foreign powers showed no enthusiasm for bolstering up the Qing government and were even willing to recognize the status of the revolutionary forces, and that Yuan Shikai who had seized power and was still capable of going on with the war was willing to come to terms with them. Little did they realize that the imperialists and Yuan were engaged in a plot against them.

2. YUAN SHIKAI'S "VICTORY"

Yuan Shikai was a man who had followed closely in the footsteps of Li Hongzhang. In 1900, as Governor of Shandong, he had suppressed the Yi He Tuan by armed force in order to protect the foreigners. When ordered to proceed to Beijing with his armies to defend the capital against the onslaught of the combined forces of the eight foreign powers, Yuan had wavered and then co-operated with the governors and viceroys in the South who observed "neutrality" and maintained friendly relations with the powers throughout the Yi He Tuan Uprising. These efforts won him the favour of the imperialists. Li Hongzhang, before he died in 1901, recommended

Yuan for the post of viceroy of Zhili and, concurrently, of commander-in-chief of the Beiyang army group. These two posts were the key to the control of the military forces of the Qing court, and therefore of the whole situation. Li Hongzhang considered that after his death only Yuan Shikai would be able to win the favour of the imperialists and control the internal situation.

Yuan Shikai had come into prominence when he was training troops in Xiaozhan, near Tianjin in 1896. With the assistance of foreigners the force under his command gradually developed into the "New Army," the most powerful in China at that period. When he became viceroy of Zhili and, concurrently, head of the Beiyang army group, his influence in the Qing government began to grow so strong that it provoked jealousy among other cliques in the government and especially among its officials of the Manchu nationality, who were afraid he might usurp the throne. Therefore, in 1909, he was relieved of his post. After this, Yuan retired to his native town of Zhangde, in Henan Province, where he lived in "seclusion." But his influence in the armies remained, and when the Wuchang Uprising broke out in 1911, the Qing government, panic-stricken and completely at a loss, begged him to return to his former post.

The British Minister Jordan reported to his government on October 16, 1911:

> Yuan Shih-kai . . . was recalled to power, and requested in so many words to save the Empire. . . . His name will carry great weight with the troops . . . and his loyalty is not in question.[1]

This shows that the powers thought highly of Yuan. In the revolutionary camp, particularly among the constitutional monarchists and the former Qing officials who now donned revolutionary garb, Yuan's ascent to power was regarded with mixed feelings. There was fear of Yuan's power, but at the same time there was hope that he would stop supporting the Qing rulers and thus precipitate their downfall. These elements wanted to see in Yuan the man who could control the situation once the revolution was over.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 701.

Such a state of affairs helped Yuan smoothly to carry out his plot to slow down the collapse of the Qing rule, and prevent the revolutionary forces from gaining a quick victory. He kept frightening the Qing rulers with the revolution, saying that if they refused to abdicate, he would be unable to cope with the situation. He played the same trick on the leaders of the revolution, bullying them into believing that he would support the Qing government and carry on the war to the finish, unless they (the revolutionaries) submitted to him.

Perceiving what Yuan had up his sleeve, the imperialists lost no time in coming to his aid, for although the Qing government was still their loyal servant, it was much too weak to stem the tide. As to the "moderates" in the revolutionary camp who from the very outset had shown their willingness to compromise, the foreign powers doubted if they could seize leadership in the course of the revolution and establish order to the advantage of imperialism. For this reason they though it better to replace the Qing government by Yuan Shikai and thus block the progress of the revolution.

It was apparent that the armistice talks conducted in December 1911 were working against the revolution, for in the North the main Qing forces had not yet been destroyed and Yuan Shikai was gaining the time he needed to reorganize them. The armistice negotiations were pre-arranged in Beijing between Yuan and the British Minister, Jordan, who ordered the British consul in Hankou to arrange for the North and South to meet. Hankou was first chosen as the site for the peace conference, but on its very eve, it was moved to the "International Settlement" in Shanghai, which was under direct imperialist influence. On December 17 the talks began. On the 20th the envoys of Britain, the United States, France, Russia, Japan and Germany addressed a joint memorandum to the representatives of both sides, stressing that prolongation of the civil war would be detrimental to the interests of foreign countries and a threat to the lives and property of their nationals. They expressed the hope that

the talks would be concluded at an early date and that hostilities would be brought to an end.[1]

The talks were still in progress when a provisional government was established at Nanjing on January 1, 1912 with Sun Yat-sen as its provisional president. This provoked Yuan Shikai into claiming that the South had no right to establish a government and that he, rather than Sun Yat-sen, should have been made president. That the southern government was prepared to accept even these absurd views could be explained only by the fact that imperialists had a hand in the affair. As matters stood then, the powers were not prepared to bring about the immediate downfall of the Qing regime and wanted to support Yuan Shikai. When they proclaimed their policy of "neutrality," they had also announced that they would stop granting loans to the Qing government. Nevertheless, they loaned it 3,100,000 taels of silver through the Four-Power Consortium and allotted it part of the customs revenues. At the beginning of the negotiations, the powers stopped giving the Qing government its share of the customs revenues, but announced that they were ready to grant it small loans "to keep business going in Beijing." William J. Calhoun, American Minister in Beijing, was a painstaking advocate of such loans. His argument was that if the Beijing government became unable to maintain power because of financial difficulties, China would be thrown into a state of anarchy. He claimed that a loan to Yuan Shikai would discourage the Chinese leaders in the South from making excessive demands that might block the conclusion of an agreement in the North-South armistice negotiations.[2]

In late January 1912, the South agreed to give up the presidency to Yuan Shikai, but on conditions which Yuan still found unacceptable. The talks almost broke down. On January 29, a nominally Austrian firm Arnhold Karberg & Co., actually the biggest German concern in China, suddenly loaned the Qing govern-

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[1] See Zhang Zhongfu, *A History of China's Foreign Relations* (in Chinese), p. 38.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

ment £700,000 (that was, in fact, a loan to Yuan Shikai). Here was yet another eloquent proof that the powers were supporting Yuan in his effort to force the Nanjing government to come to terms. Had the Nanjing government relied on the revolutionary people and its own strength and rid itself of all illusions about imperialism, this brandishing of dollars and pounds by the imperialists would have failed to produce any effect. Unfortunately, the Nanjing government was not of this kind.

Because of its illusions about imperialism, the Nanjing government now found itself in an unenviable position. On January 2, 1912, after the provisional government was established in Nanjing, the provisional president, Sun Yat-sen, issued another appeal to foreign governments:

> . . . In case the powers of the world are still unaware of our true intentions to maintain friendly relations with other countries, we would like to assure them of the following principles:
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> 1. All treaties entered into by the Qing government before the outbreak of the revolution will remain in force until their term of expiration, all treaties entered into after the outbreak of the revolution will be repudiated.
>
> 2. All foreign loans or indemnities incurred by the Qing government before the revolution will be acknowledged without any alteration of terms, but all loans and indemnities incurred by the Qing government after the outbreak of the revolution will be repudiated. All payments made to the Qing government after the outbreak of the revolution will not be acknowledged even if they were made under the loans contracted before the revolution.
>
> 3. All concessions granted to foreign nations or their nationals by the Qing government before the revolution will be respected, but those granted after the outbreak of the revolution will be repudiated.
>
> Furthermore, we shall always strive to cultivate better relations with all the governments and peoples of the world. It is our earnest hope that the foreign nations which have always sympathized with us will continue to maintain and strengthen the bonds of friendship, that they will bear in patience with us in the period of the trial confronting us in our work of reconstruction and that they will aid us to carry out the far-reaching plans which we are now about to undertake, which they have so long been urging upon the people of this country and which the Qing government has been unable to accomplish. . . .[1]

[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, pp. 18-19.

The Nanjing government at that time considered that the aim of the revolution was to overthrow the Qing rule which owed its existence solely to the backing of foreigners and that if the revolutionary government acknowledged all the treaties and agreements which the Qing government had servilely concluded with foreigners, the powers would break off relations with it and would even assist the revolutionary government. It never occurred to them, however, that they would not be able to mobilize the broad masses of the revolutionary people if they openly accepted the hated legacy of the Qing regime. Neither did they expect that, in spite of all this, the powers would fail to come to their aid. The powers had exacted new concessions from the Qing government even after the outbreak of the revolution (for instance, the agreement concerning the control of customs revenues by foreigners reached in the middle of December, 1911). They also had provided the Qing government with new loans. At the same time, the foreigners, by virtue of the agreement concluded with the Qing government, controlled all the customs revenues and did not give a single penny out of them to the Nanjing government, not to speak of loans. As a result, the Nanjing government found itself in greater financial straits than the Qing government.

The imperialists not only tightened their economic pressure on the Nanjing government, but also exerted other forms of pressure. Japanese and British warships concentrated on the Changjiang River. In the Northeast, the troops of Russia and Japan made ready for action. The powers announced repeatedly that if the "civil war" in China continued they would intervene in it. In the course of the peace negotiations between the North and the South, the provincial warlords and bureaucrats, under the control of Yuan Shikai, issued one statement after another in which they pressed the Nanjing government to make concessions, stressing that the country was in danger and that foreign intervention was imminent. Fear haunted the revolutionary camp in the South. The country seemed doomed unless they yielded to Yuan Shikai on every point. The United Republican Society organized by Wu Tingfang and Zhang Qian issued a manifesto at the end of December. They wrote:

> It is indeed true that the powers have not yet intervened in the Chinese revolution, but every intelligent person knows that this state of non-intervention will not last long. The reason why the powers have not yet intervened is that the civil war is just beginning. If chaotic conditions are allowed to continue, foreign intervention will follow. . . . Once the powers step in, our country will be thrown into a state of confusion.[1]

How to avert intervention by the foreign powers? The logic was to make Yuan president!

Under the circumstances, the Nanjing government gave in to Yuan step by step, and ended by submitting completely to his demands. Sun Yat-sen, leader of the Nanjing government, was unable to do anything more than put forward some conditions which in fact proved quite futile. During the talks in January, Sun proposed that the Nanjing government unite the country after the abdication of the Qing emperor and offered to retire in favour of Yuan, only after the powers had recognized this united government. These proposals, however, could not be carried out, because Yuan was firmly against the unification of the North by the South while the powers had not the slightest intention of recognizing the Nanjing government. Wang Chonghui, Foreign Minister of the Nanjing government, twice appealed to the U.S. government for recognition, only to be ignored both times. As for Yuan Shikai, he lost no time in setting up his own provisional government in Beijing after the Qing emperor's abdication on February 12, and asked the foreign envoys in Beijing to communicate this fact to their respective governments. The imperialist powers immediately promised to establish *de facto* relations with the Beijing provisional government and the Four-Power Consortium at once began to negotiate with it with a view to granting it a loan. The Consortium even promised Yuan an advance of three million taels of silver to cover the expenses connected with the liquidation of the Nanjing government and the setting up of the Beijing regime. After this, it became crystal clear that the imperialists favoured the Yuan Shikai government and not the Sun Yat-sen gov-

[1] Zhang Zhongfu, *A History of China's Foreign Relations* (in Chinese), p. 35.

ernment. The wretched Nanjing government had no alternative but to submit to Yuan Shikai and recognize his "unification." On February 13, Sun tendered his resignation to the Provisional Assembly in Nanjing and on the 15th the Assembly elected Yuan provisional president. On February 29, the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate passed a joint resolution hailing the establishment of the Chinese Republic. In the opinion of the imperialists, the Republic of China was "established" only after Sun Yat-sen had decided to resign in favour of Yuan Shikai.

At this juncture Sun Yat-sen made a last effort. He expressed hope that Yuan would move the capital to Nanjing and assume the presidency there. Yuan refused to do this because North was the base of his power. The imperialists too did not favour the removal of the capital to Nanjing because they were determined to support Yuan Shikai, and because they had military control of the Beijing-Tianjin area, a privilege granted them by the "Protocol of 1901." On February 15, in a telegram addressed to the Nanjing government, Yuan declined the invitation to come to the south. He said:

> . . . The legations at Beijing are worried about my intended departure for Nanjing. They have repeatedly reminded me of the unsettled conditions in the provinces of Fengtian and Heilongjiang and in the Leagues of Outer Mongolia. Internal troubles and menace of foreign aggression are very closely connected. If my departure from Beijing should be followed immediately by disorders, it will certainly be against my long-cherished wish to bring about national salvation.[1]

It is evident that Yuan intended to bluff the Nanjing government by referring to the legations at Beijing which had long played the role of the supervisor of the Qing court. Nanjing, however, refused to budge. A special delegation of eight including Cai Yuanpei, Song Jiaoren and Wang Jingwei was sent to Beijing to plead with Yuan to come to the south. The sly Yuan Shikai accorded the special delegates a "hearty" welcome and feigned great "sincerity" in discussing with them the question of his trip to Nanjing. But at the same time he issued secret orders to his own troops to stage a "mutiny"

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[1] Bai Jiao, *Yuan Shikai and the Republic of China* (in Chinese), p. 24.

in Beijing. He thus created a tense situation to justify his claim that he must remain in the city. The imperialists immediately backed him by deploying their troops in the Beijing-Tianjin area, while the Japanese landed forces at Qinhuangdao. An impression was created that "internal troubles and foreign aggression" would certainly follow Yuan's departure from Beijing.

By now those elements in the south which had long been willing to compromise with Yuan Shikai began to raise their voice. Li Yuanhong, for instance, said in a public statement:

> We are informed that troops have staged a mutiny in the Beijing-Tianjin area. Although it has been suppressed, more disorders are likely to occur because some of the mutineers are still at large. These events have angered the foreigners. One foreign country is secretly planning to send troops to occupy the capital. If matters are allowed to take their own course, calamities will befall us. The great powers are ready for action and there is imminent danger of China being carved up.

What way out did Li Yuanhong propose? We return to his statement:

> There is no imminent danger in dropping Nanjing as the capital; on the other hand, our country will be doomed if Beijing is not made the seat of the government. Even if Nanjing is better situated than Beijing, we still have to take the present situation into consideration and compromise accordingly, especially since current events weigh heavily against making Nanjing the capital.[1]

According to the opinion of Vice-President Li, there would be chaos in China if the Nanjing government continued to persist in its stand, and the country would be doomed if Yuan Shikai yielded to the Nanjing government!

While in Beijing, Cai Yuanpei, one of Nanjing's negotiators and a sincere and honest man, also fell victim to the scaremongering of Yuan Shikai and the foreign imperialists. He too thought it better to submit entirely to Yuan Shikai. He sent telegrams back to Nanjing, saying:

> Probably it will be difficult to prevent foreigners from having a free hand in China. . . . The paramount question now is to establish a unified government as quickly as possible. We should compromise on

[1] *Letters of Vice-President Li Yuanhong* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, pp. 7-8.

other minor matters so as to settle the situation.[1]

He also said:

> Signs of foreign intervention are looming large on the horizon as internal troubles continue. Great harm will be done if the country is thrown into a state of anarchy. . . . The foreigners are already complaining about the situation. If prompt measures are not taken to allay public sentiment, the situation will become untenable.[2]

The wrangle about the site of the capital was the last-ditch battle of the Nanjing government in its retreat on all fronts. Its defeat was nothing extraordinary. It may be seen that the leaders of the 1911 Revolution were weak on two points. Firstly, they feared a split and hoped for speedy "unification" no matter by whom, and they thought that without unification chaos would ensue. Secondly, they feared foreign intervention and eagerly hoped for "recognition" by foreign powers without which they thought the Republic of China would perish. What was the reason for these psychological weaknesses? The answer is that the 1911 Revolution failed to mobilize the broad masses of the people. When the leaders of the revolution looked about them and saw no forces to rely upon, they could find no way out other than submission to the insistent demands of the appeasers and capitulation to the counter-revolutionaries. The view became dominant that China could not be unified without Yuan Shikai and that China would be erased from the map of the world if it failed to acknowledge the ruler hand-picked by the imperialist powers.

On March 10, 1912, with the concurrence of the Nanjing government, Yuan Shikai took the oath of office in Beijing as provisional president. On April 1, Sun Yat-sen was formally relieved of that post. The Assembly at Nanjing soon moved to Beijing. By May 1913, the U.S. government, believing that the Yuan administration was stable enough, took the lead in officially recognizing it. After October, when Yuan was "elected" president, other powers follow-

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[1] Li Jiannong, *Thirty Years of Modern Chinese Political History* (in Chinese), p. 240.

[2] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, pp. 5-6.

ed suit and also accorded recognition. Now both "unification" and "recognition" had become a fact. But the Yuan Shikai administration which had "unified" the country and had been "recognized" by the powers was nothing but the new instrument with which foreign imperialism had replaced the Qing government.

Ten years later, in 1924, Sun Yat-sen correctly summarized the experience of this period in his Manifesto of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang. He said:

> Although it had been claimed that the revolution (of 1911 — *H.S.*) was victorious . . . yet before long the situation compelled it to make concessions to the counter-revolutionary autocratic class. These also represented indirect concessions to imperialism and accounted for the defeat of the first revolution. Yuan Shikai at the time stood for the counter-revolutionary autocratic class, and the forces under his command were not very powerful at the beginning of the revolution. The reason why the revolutionaries could not prevail over him was that they tried hard to avoid a prolongation of the civil war and that there was not as yet a well-organized and disciplined party acquainted with its functions and aims. Had there been such a party, Yuan Shikai's plot would have been frustrated. He would not have been able to take advantage of us and we would have won. Yuan, head of the Beiyang warlords, had always collaborated with the powers. All the warlords and bureaucrats of the counter-revolutionary autocratic class were loyal to him in order to keep their positions. It was to this man that the revolutionaries handed ovevr state power. It goes without saying that the revolution could not but fail.[1]

This statement by Sun Yat-sen deserves particular attention. It is true that the 1911 Revolution turned out to be a victory for Yuan Shikai and a failure for the revolutionaries. But why did Yuan Shikai win? Yuan was backed by the imperialists, but there were other reasons too. On the one hand, the imperialists supported Yuan Shikai and, on the other, the forces of the revolution adopted a policy of appeasement towards the imperialists, which also meant appeasement of Yuan Shikai. This is the fundamental reason as to why Yuan emerged victorious in the 1911 Revolution.

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[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, pp. 45-46.

3. WAS YUAN A "STRONG MAN"?

What the imperialists had always been striving for politically in China was to establish, nurture and support a regime which could serve them and at the same time be strong enough to rule the country. The American writer, Owen Lattimore, says:

> In a country as weakly organized as China (the imperialists thought so — *H.S.*), where foreign interests are strongly organized, they (the imperialists — *H.S.*) feel most nearly at ease when they can present their demands on some one man. When they can find such a man — a Li Hung-chang at the end of the nineteenth century, a Yuan Shih-kai at the beginning of the twentieth century — they are always willing to give him enough support in loans, military equipment, and training for his troops to make him strong enough to control the country on their behalf.[1]

Had the Qing Dynasty collapsed before 1900, the imperialists would certainly have regarded Li Hongzhang as its best successor. But since the Chinese people, through the 1911 Revolution, had forced the imperialists to acknowledge the downfall of the Qing regime, the latter found Yuan Shikai and helped him become the new ruler of China. The storm and stress had passed, and everything still remained under their control. It is only natural that they were extremely satisfied with the situation. But there was one latent factor which the imperialists failed to understand: The political consciousness of the Chinese people had grown immeasurably since the events of 1911-12. It was then difficult to appraise the tremendous educational effect the revolution, even if it ended in failure, had on the people. It was altogether impossible for the imperialists to understand this when they were congratulating themselves on their "success."

The imperialists were never able to make a correct appraisal of the Chinese people's political consciousness and the strength of the revolution. How did the foreigners view the birth of the "Republic of China"? Lattimore writes:

> At the time of the Chinese Revolution of 1911 the majority of the American experts (and of course the Europeans, too) were strongly of

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[1] Owen Lattimore, *Solution in Asia*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1945, p. 80.

> the opinion that a republican form of government was absolutely unsuitable for the Chinese. An emperor was the only thing the Chinese could understand. They were not interested in self-government. All they wanted was stable government, of a paternalistic kind — law, order, and reasonable taxes. The warlord Yuan Shih-kai was described as a strong man of the kind that China needed and the Chinese could understand. Sun Yat-sen was described either as an amiable but unpractical idealist, or as a mischievous visionary.[1]

How far removed were such views from the real state of mind of the Chinese people at that time! It was because of such views that the imperialists pinned their greatest hopes on Yuan Shikai. In their opinion, Yuan was the ideal "strong man," and his government, while as servile as the Qing regime, was far more powerful and stable. Therefore they gave him full and unscrupulous support and finally helped him restore the monarchy. Little did they expect that only four years later their "strong man" would fall, unable to withstand the condemnation and opposition of the people.

Needless to say, after the establishment of his "unified government," Yuan Shikai recognized without the slightest hesitation all the humiliating treaties which the Qing Government had contracted with the foreign powers — even the leaders of the 1911 Revolution had promised to do this. In April 1912, when the Assembly held its first session in Beijing, Yuan issued a manifesto in which he said:

> It is a matter of great importance that our people should sincerely consolidate friendly relations with the powers. All the treaties entered into by the Qing government should be strictly observed, and we should carry out as quickly as possible all the obligations stipulated in these treaties.[2]

In October 1913, when he became president, he made a statement to the diplomatic corps in Beijing: "As president, I pledge that in my future actions I will be guided by the sole principle of observing treaties and precedents and of maintaining friendly relations with the powers."[3] This was quite a frank statement. What Yuan meant

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

[2] *Letters of President Yuan Shikai* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 4.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 27.

by his "principle" was nothing but to beg for aid from his imperialist masters. In order to secure this aid from the imperialists, it was natural for him to observe both written treaties and unwritten "precedents." He was willing to do in this respect, not only all the Qing government had done to fulfil treaty provisions, but even what it had not done. Thus, the "Republican government" officially recognized the precedent set by the Qing court on the eve of its abdication to put all customs revenues under the direct control of foreigners. In 1912-1913, the Yuan government guaranteed in explicit terms the "spheres of influence" of Japan in the Northeast, of Russia in Mongolia, and of Britain in Tibet. The United States obtained the privilege of extending loans for the harnessing of the Huaihe River and the Standard Oil Company of New York got the exclusive privilege of surveying oil deposits in northern China and exploiting the oilfields in Yanchang, Shaanxi Province, and Chengde, Rehe Province.

Yuan Shikai had his own traitorous theories concerning toadying to foreign powers. He made the following statement after taking oath as president:

> Absorption of foreign civilization and capital is nationalism. As a matter of fact, it is also cosmopolitanism. In a world where civilization has attained its highest phase, the "haves" will help the "have-nots." Every society will have its place and yet there will be hardly any boundaries between nations. Confucius often talked about universal harmony. We now have a republican government and the outmoded ideas about isolation should be completely done away with. It is necessary for the people of our country to abide by their own laws. The should, in particular, observe International Law. In dealing with foreign countries, we should act in accordance with the rules of conduct of civilized countries. We should never discriminate against foreigners because this will lead to difficulties and because this runs counter to justice. . . . As President of the Republic of China, I declare that all the treaties, agreements and conventions with foreign countries entered into by the former Qing government and the Provisional Government of the Republic of China shall be observed. All lawful contracts with foreign companies and nationals entered into by the former Qing government shall also be observed. In order to maintain cordial relations with foreign countries and preserve peace, we must recognize all the rights, privileges and immunities enjoyed by foreign nationals in China in accordance with International Law, domestic laws and various precedents and conventions. Our people should know that this is an established principle in interna-

tional relations. Foreign powers will treat us with civility only if we prove to them our good faith.[1]

The Chinese people, according to Yuan's logic, should take it for granted that their status in the world was the status of a colonial and semi-colonial people. This was what he called "cosmopolitanism," and "nationalism" by turns! Yuan Shikai even considered it an honour bestowed upon him by the foreigners that he rather than anyone else should have the right to repay the foreign debts incurred by the Qing government. He said:

> After the establishment of the Provisional Government, the foreign powers recognized our right to enjoy the credit secured by the Qing government. All the debts and indemnities that should have been paid last year and this year and all the debts incurred by provincial governments amount to £ 12,000,000. It is incumbent upon the government to pay these debts. The powers have urged us many times to honour our obligations, but we have not lived up to their expectations. How can our country be consolidated if it has no honour? The very thought of it distresses me deeply.[2]

The real meaning of Yuan's words was simply this: The powers have allowed me to exercise the right of paying the debts, that is to say, they have formally engaged me as their agent. If I fail to carry out the tasks entrusted to me by my masters, how sad I will feel!

How could such a faithful servant fail to curry the favour of his imperialist masters? Like the Qing government, Yuan had no way of overcoming his financial troubles except by securing more foreign loans. The imperialists thought this jackal would behave if they tightened the leash of loans. So, for the purpose of jointly extending loans to Yuan Shikai, the Four-Power Consortium was expanded to include Japan and Russia — thus becoming the Six-Power Consortium. Immediately following the establishment of the Yuan government, the new Consortium, while advancing some money to keep it going, planned to extend loans to it on a large scale. The condition put forward by the powers was that the Consortium should be allowed to establish direct control over the fi-

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 8-9.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 4-5.

nances of the Chinese government. When this came to the notice of the people it raised a nation-wide storm of protest. Yuan Shikai was thus prevented from yielding immediately to the Consortium and he postponed the signing of the agreement for a £25,000,000 loan until April 1913. On the eve of its signature, however, the United States suddenly withdrew from the Consortium. This was due to a conflict of interests within the imperialist camp, but the United States hypocritically claimed that the Consortium had no right to interfere in China's internal affairs. As a matter of fact, the year-old negotiations concerning the conditions of this loan were conducted with the full participation of the United States, which had also participated in formulating them.

This illegal loan and the assassination of Song Jiaoren[1] (in March 1913) shocked the Chinese people. By now the revolutionary, democratic elements began to see the danger and staged a "second revolution," this time against Yuan Shikai. Only those under the direct influence of Sun Yat-sen, however, felt the necessity of opposing Yuan Shikai by armed force. The Tong Meng Hui had by then developed into the Kuomintang. Because of its complex composition and its repeated concessions to Yuan Shikai and the imperialist powers during the preceding year, the Kuomintang had isolated itself from the broad masses of the people. Yuan, enjoying the full support of the imperialists, considered himself strong enough to take up the gauntlet. With the £25,000,000 Consortium loan in hand, he started an offensive against the Kuomintang in the south in July 1913, and wiped out part of its armed forces in that area. In launching the attack, he declared to the foreign envoys in Beijing:

> . . . The Chinese government . . . is making every effort to meet the claims of the foreigners. So long as the country is not unified, it is impossible to start demobilization and currency reform. In the circumstances, it would be difficult to protect foreign interests. A situation like this is not only unfair to our people, but also to all friendly powers.[2]

[1] Song Jiaoren (1882-1913) — a Kuomintang leader who advocated parliamentary government with a view to curbing the power of Yuan Shikai. He was murdered by Yuan's agents.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, pp. 6-7.

This was equivalent to saying to the powers: It is for your interests that I am resorting to armed force to unify the country.

The failure of the "second revolution" further strengthened the imperialists' confidence in Yuan Shikai. They regarded him as a faithful servant, much more so than the Qing rulers, and believed that, unlike the latter who were too weak to maintain internal order, he was exactly the "strongman" they had been looking for. They were convinced that, with the money they had given him, he had succeeded in bringing about the "unification" of the country by force. The first country to recognize Yuan's government had been the United States, and following his display of military strength, the other powers also showed their full confidence in him by extending to him *de jure* recognition. The imperialists considered they had nothing to worry about so long as they had Yuan as their agent. And Yuan thought nothing could stand in his way so long as he enjoyed imperialist support.

Later events, however, were to show that at the time his imperialist masters were patting him on the back for his "victory," Yuan had already reached the zenith of his power. Although he continued to appear strong for a while longer, his decline had already begun. This was because the people, more experienced now than before the 1911 Revolution, quickly saw Yuan's real intentions. Nobody would give credence to the claim that "China is doomed without Yuan Shikai." On the contrary, there was a universal feeling that China was doomed unless he was ousted.

4. "ASCEND ONE MORE STEP"

Having suppressed the "second revolution" by armed force, Yuan Shikai began to tighten his rule over the people. In October 1913, he coerced the National Assembly into electing him president. In November, he ordered the dissolution of Kuomintang and purged the National Assembly of Kuomintang members. In January 1914, he replaced the National Assembly with a Central Political Council made up solely of his own followers and formed the Constitutional

Council. At the beginning of May, he promulgated his "Constitutional Compact." Thus, Yuan Shikai achieved the complete liquidation of the National Assembly and the Provisional Constitution, the only two remaining products of the 1911 Revolution. The Provisional Constitution of 1912 had provided for the organization of a central government along the lines of the cabinet system, with considerable limitations on the power of the president. Yuan's "constitution," by contrast, rested supreme power in the president. In the field of foreign relations, Yuan continued to curry favour with the powers and to sell out China. Internally, he took steps to consolidate his dictatorial rule and to unify the country under it. In his speech at the inaugural meeting of his Central Political Council on December 15, 1913, he justified his policy in the following terms:

> . . . People fail to understand that the might of a country depends on its domestic and foreign policies. The success of its domestic and foreign policies depends, in its turn, on the strength of the government. It matters little whether the regime is monarchical or republican. . . . (Here Yuan hinted at his intention of restoring the monarchy — *H.S.*) Foreign affairs are even more difficult to handle than domestic ones. In spite of the conclusion of the Sino-Russian Agreement, the independence of Outer Mongolia has not yet been liquidated. In the negotiations concerning Tibet, the British so far have not retreated a step. While the other powers are watching us with covetous eyes, each trying to lay its hands on territory in East Asia, we have no reason to feel at ease although the Republic has been established. Further, diplomatic success often hinges on the success of our internal rule. If our internal rule is sound, the powers will naturally be friendly with us. But if we cannot put our own house in order, we have no reason to blame others. Since our internal situation is so chaotic, it is only natural that our relations with foreign powers have taken such a turn. In a word, the crux is that the government is not strong enough. The reason is self-evident.[1]

In the passage above, Yuan's logic is clear: That the imperialists are oppressing the Chinese nation and committing aggression against it is a natural result of the fact that "I, Yuan Shikai," have too little power. People should not blame me for failures in handling foreign affairs, but should give me still more power. As a matter of fact, the imperialist powers welcomed the concentration of power in

[1] *Letters of President Yuan Shikai* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, pp. 29-31.

Yuan's hands, for the more powerful this imperialist agent was, the safer were the rights and privileges of the imperialists in China.

It is an undeniable fact that the United States, Japan, Britain and Germany persuaded and encouraged Yuan to establish a dictatorship and subsequently to restore the monarchy. That is why, in the summer of 1915 when Yuan decided to launch the movement for the restoration of monarchy, he assured the responsible members of the Chou An Hui[1] that "there will be no diplomatic complications, you can go ahead," and that he had taken good care of the international side of the question, so that they did not need to worry.[2] He was not making empty boasts. In July 1915, he sent Gu Weijun (V.K. Wellington Koo) to the United States to campaign for his monarchical movement.

Quite a number of foreigners served as "advisers" in Yuan's government. Among them were Nagao Ariga of Japan, a close friend of Japanese Prime Minister Shigenobu Okuma, and the American Frank J. Goodnow, formerly a professor of Columbia University and president of Johns Hopkins University. Both played a considerable role in planning the monarchical movement. In his book *China and the World War*, W. R. Wheeler dealt with Yuan's "Constitutional Compact" of 1914 and pointed out that "Professor F. J. Goodnow of Columbia University who has been appointed constitutional adviser had a large influence in forming this instrument." Wheeler pointed out further that, with the promulgation of this "Constitutional Compact," China "seemed to be tending toward an autocratic government under the guise of a republic."[3] It can thus be seen that long before the publication of his notorious "On Republic and Monarchy," Goodnow had sold his services to Yuan's dictatorship. Goodnow's article was published in August 1915.

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[1] An organization formed by Yuan Shikai's adherents for the purpose of carrying out Yuan's monarchical plot.

[2] Liu Yan, *History of Imperialist Oppression of China* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, pp. 66-67.

[3] W. R. Wheeler, *China and the World War*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1919, pp. 5-6.

Afterwards, some American and Chinese bourgeois "scholars" made out that Goodnow's article was misused by Yuan Shikai's Chou An Hui to serve as a theoretical basis to further the monarchical movement. These "scholars" pretended that the original aim of Goodnow's article was to make a purely "theoretical" study as to what form of government — republican or monarchical — was most suitable for China and under what conditions a return to monarchy would be in the interests of the country. But if we read Goodnow's article, we shall see that, proceeding from a general "theory," the author arrived at an absolutely concrete conclusion.

Goodnow wrote that "... in a country where the people's intelligence is not high . . . a republican form of government . . . generally leads to the worst possible form of government...." Then he continued:

> It is therefore becoming less and less likely that countries will be permitted in the future to work out their own salvation through disorder and revolution, as may have been the case during the past century with some of the South American countries. Under modern conditions countries must devise some method of government under which peace will be maintained or they will have to submit to foreign control.

Referring to the situation in China, he was even more explicit: "The change from autocratic to republican government made four years ago was too violent to permit the entertainment of any very strong hopes of its immediate success." And he further asserted:

> It is of course not susceptible of doubt that a monarchy is better suited than a republic to China. China's history and traditions, her social and economic conditions, her relations with foreign powers all make it probable that the country would develop that constitutional government which it must develop if it is to preserve its independence as a state, more easily as a monarchy than as a republic.[1]

All this was obviously meant as a threat to the Chinese people that intervention by the powers could put an end to China's independence and that what the powers really wanted to see in China was a constitutional monarchy and not a genuinely democratic constitutional regime. As we have every reason to believe that the

[1] Bai Jiao, *Yuan Shikai and the Republic of China* (in Chinese), pp. 168-172.

opinion of Yuan Shikai's adviser — a onetime president of an American university — was a more or less accurate reflection of the policy the United States was then following in China; we see that the United States, as an imperialist aggressor, expected the Chinese government to be "an autocratic government under the guise of a republic" or in other words, a monarchical government in constitutional clothing. It is little wonder then that Yuan and his followers, who were out-and-out traitors, made use of the statement of this "great statesman" of a "democratic republic" to justify their restoration of the monarchy.

As regards Japan, it was common knowledge that it made the acceptance of its Twenty-one Demands by Yuan Shikai a condition for its recognition of monarchy in China. The outbreak of the imperialist war in Europe at the end of July 1914 involved almost all the Western powers. Although the United States was not yet taking part in the war, it too could not pay much attention to the Far East. Consequently, of all the powers, Japan came to have the most decisive say in the Chinese question. When Yuan Shikai set his heart on becoming emperor and was convinced that the United States would consent to his doing so, he knew it was also essential for him to get Japanese assistance. Japan knew this too and so on January 18, 1915, submitting the Twenty-one Demands direct to Yuan, Eki Hioki, Japanese Minister to China, significantly said: "If negotiations are conducted with sincerity, it will be the wish of Japan that Your Excellency ascend one more step." The malicious Twenty-one Demands aimed at China's destruction. The news roused the people throughout the country and brought a storm of protest down on Yuan Shikai's head. The traitorous Yuan Shikai hesitated for some time, but bent on getting Japan's assistance to make himself emperor, he finally accepted the Demands on May 9. During all this time, Nagao Ariga, Japanese adviser to Yuan's government, travelled back and forth between Beijing and Tokyo, with the sole purpose of bringing this deal to a successful conclusion.

It is necessary to deal at some length with Japan's policy towards China at that time. In September-October 1914, a Japanese expansionist organization known as the Black Dragon Society (Ko-

kuryukai)[1] had put forward to the Japanese government a secret memorandum which was later exposed. The policy advocated by the memorandum on the whole coincided with which Japan was then following in China. What was especially significant was that it contained something like a draft of the Twenty-one Demands. The memorandum chiefly urged Japan to take advantage of the war in Europe to "quickly solve the Chinese question," i.e. to seize complete political and financial control over China and virtually reduce it to a Japanese colony. But how could this goal be achieved? The answer depended on whether or not Yuan Shikai should be supported. The memorandum pointed out that, under Yuan's rule, there was every likelihood that revolutions and insurrections would break out which Yuan would not be able to quell without foreign assistance. "When this occurs," asked the memorandum of the Black Dragon Society, "shall we uphold Yuan's government and assist him to suppress the internal insurrection with the certain assurance that we could influence him to agree to our demands, or shall we help the revolutionists to achieve a success and realize our object through them?" The Black Dragon Society was against the first choice and explained that the reason was "because the majority of the Chinese people have lost all faith in the tottering Yuan Shikai who is discredited and attacked by the whole nation for having sold his country."[2] Furthermore, Yuan relied too much on Western powers and the Black Dragon Society was afraid that eventually he might prove disloyal to Japan. Advancing these arguments, the Black Dragon Society advised the Japanese government not to support Yuan's regime "blindly" and persistently.

What is the lesson to be drawn from the arguments of the Black Dragon Society? It is clear that this organization was hatching a plot based on the tactics various imperialist powers had used in dealing with the 1911 Revolution. If, during the 1911 Revolution, the Western powers had found a servant even more obsequious

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[1] An organization of secret agents and plotters set up by the Japanese imperialists in 1901 mainly for the purpose of annexing China's northeastern provinces.

[2] Wheeler, *op cit.*, pp. 191-196.

than the Qing government, there was no reason why Japan could not find one more servile than Yuan Shikai. That, of course, was what the Black Dragon Society meant when it spoke of "helping the revolutionists." Seeking undisputed domination over China, the Japanese imperialists no longer wanted to share an agent with the Western powers. Moreover, the shrewd Japanese conspirators had already realized that Yuan's government was not really stable and that he could not expect active help from the Western powers now engaged in mutual slaughter. Therefore, the Japanese imperialists felt that they could hand-pick a new Chinese ruler who would be fully under their control. Subsequent events proved that the Japanese government actually adopted the secret society's plan. On the one hand, it continued to use Yuan as a tool and encouraged him to go ahead with his monarchical movement as well as urged him to sign on the Twenty-one Demands. On the other, it was ready at any moment to kick Yuan Shikai out in favour of a new tool. We can therefore see the reason why the Qing government and the train of traitorous dictators who ruled China after it were servile to and yet afraid of the Japanese imperialists and why they really welcomed the aggressive policy of the United States in China, which was labelled the "open door" doctrine. In the eyes of China's reactionary rulers, Japanese imperialism was a "cruel master" liable to give its loyal servant the sack at any moment, while U.S. imperialism was a "kind master." With this master, the servant, so long as he was loyal, could count on praise and reward and have no fear of being ruthlessly kicked out. But to the Chinese people there was little difference between Japan and the United States, because both were imperialist aggressors ready to support any reactionary ruler to enslave the Chinese people.

At any rate, Yuan Shikai believed that he had the backing of the imperialists, and in this he was right. Yuan was supported not only by the United States, but by various imperialist countries in Europe as well. The great friend of the Chinese people, Lenin, pointed out in his article "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia" in 1913 that the "civilized" European bourgeoisie" will set the *guns* in motion, in alliance with Yuan Shikai, that adventurer, traitor

and friend of reaction, crush a republic in 'backward' Asia." He wrote indignantly:

> . . . the *entire* European bourgeoisie can scarcely be cited than the support it is lending to *reaction* in Asia in furtherance of the selfish aims of the financial manipulators and capitalist swindlers.
>
> . . . And "advanced" Europe? It is plundering China and helping the foes of democracy, the foes of freedom in China!
>
> . . . All the commanders of Europe, all the European bourgeoisie are *in alliance* with all the forces of reaction and medievalism in China.[1]

In August 1915, when Yuan felt assured that the foreign powers were behind him, his monarchical movement began to assume an open character. At that time he still believed that the only important thing was the approval of his masters — the imperialist powers; as for the opinion of the people, he thought it could be totally ignored. He thought that it was enough for his Chou An Hui to go into action, and that then, with the assistance of his own bureaucratic apparatus, it would be a simple matter to create "public opinion." He completely overlooked the fact that even though his followers might succeed in creating seemingly unanimous and nationwide public opinion to support his claim to be Emperor Yuan Shikai, the real public opinion, opposing his autocratic and traitorous rule, would become all the more indignant after the exposure of the monarchist plot. But in fact it was this powerful public opinion that called into existence the force that dealt him the fatal blow.

Japan, in the meantime, was standing by and waiting for its chance. On October 28, the Japanese Minister, together with the British and Russian envoys, approached Yuan's government with the following inquiry:

> On the surface, the Chinese monarchical movement is not meeting strong internal opposition But the Japanese government has received reports that there is an unexpectedly strong undercurrent of opposition. . . . The Japanese government . . . has therefore decided . . . to ask the Chinese government whether it is confident it will safely achieve its goal. . . .

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[1] Lenin, *Collected Works*, Eng. ed., FLPH, Moscow, 1963, Vol. 19, pp. 99-100.

This "friendly" inquiry was answered in a servile tone by Cao Rulin, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs in Yuan's government:

> The government has inquired of the various provincial authorities whether they can maintain order. . . . The various provinces report that there have been no disturbances and that precautionary measures have been strengthened. Friendly countries are requested to help us by suppressing all disturbances in places beyond China's jurisdiction. Thus, there is no reason to fear disorders. . . .

On December 15, after Yuan had come out openly in favour of the monarchical system, the Japanese Minister suddenly appeared for the second time at Yuan's foreign ministry, accompanied by the British, Russian, French and Italian envoys. The Japanese Minister declared that "Japan and the other four countries . . . have decided to keep a watch on China."[1] The representations made on both occasions by the imperialist powers on the initiative of Japan revealed the following: Firstly, in China there was a strong undercurrent of opposition against Yuan (the Yunnan Uprising broke out soon after). Secondly, Japan was playing a double game. If Yuan failed, Japan could deceive the Chinese people by asserting that it had not supported Yuan's claim to the throne and would therefore be in a position to groom new rulers for the Chinese people. If Yuan succeeded, Japan would assume the leading position among the powers in jointly keeping a "watch" on China and would place Yuan under its own direct control. By then, the war in Europe had been going on for a year and a half, and the Western powers could devote still less attention to events in the Far East.

The U.S. government was also approached to adhere to the Japanese representations to Yuan's government. But it declined the invitation, because the United States did not want to tail after Japan. The then U.S. Minister to China, Paul S. Reinsch, wrote in his *An American Diplomat in China* that when Yuan was "elected" emperor in December 1915, "the Russian and French ministers had already expressed themselves privately as favourable to recognition. . . . The majority of foreign representatives at Beijing were favourable to recog-

[1] Bai Jiao, *Yuan Shikai and the Republic of China* (in Chinese), p. 293, pp. 297-298.

nizing the new order on January 1 (1916 — *H.S.*), when the promulgation was to be made." Then the Yunnan Uprising broke out unexpectedly and compelled Yuan's government to postpone the date of enthronement. Reinsch in his book called the postponement a "mistake." He said: "If Yuan and his advisers had acted boldly at this time in promulgating the monarchy, recognition by a number of powers would probably have followed. . . ."[1] These words show that the American Minister was very sorry about the momentary display of hesitation and timidity on the part of Yuan's government.

At that time, British-owned newspapers in China clearly stated that the foreigners were willing to support Yuan's efforts to centralize power, but that if Yuan used fraudulent means to restore the monarchy and this brought about revolts and defections and his imminent collapse, the other powers would not be able to help — however sorry they might feel for him. The Shanghai newspaper *North-China Daily News,* for example, wrote that Yuan had succeeded in consolidating his position mostly with the moral and financial help of the foreigners. . . . The latter had helped Yuan attain his present position with the hope, the paper declared, that he would use the power, secured with foreign support, in the interests of his country. The paper said that Yuan was trying to improve China's political situation by restoring the monarchy but stressed there was danger that the situation might become worse. *The Beijing & Tianjin Times* said that the foreigners expected that the leader of China would uphold his prestige. Deploring the turn the situation had taken, the paper said it was sorry for Yuan Shikai.[2] How could the imperialists not feel sorry for Yuan Shikai's failure when it also was their own failure?

Yuan Shikai found himself on the horns of a dilemma. The Army of National Salvation in Yunnan Province which rose against Yuan was neither numerically strong nor well organized, yet coupled with the nation-wide anti-Yuan sentiments it seemed to be a very

[1] Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China,* p. 179, p. 183.

[2] Bai Jiao, *Yuan Shikai and the Republic of China* (in Chinese), p. 231, p. 314.

strong force. It looked as if Japan was bent on causing Yuan trouble while his "kind masters" in Europe and America were merely regretful that, in spite of their wishes, they could not help him. On April 7, he got an American loan of U.S. $5,000,000 but this was only an injection that could stimulate but not save the patient. In such circumstances, Yuan's own ruling machine began to totter and disintegrate. When the Yunnan Uprising broke out, the foreigners asked Yuan's government about the situation. Its reply was:

> The Yunnan disturbances were created by a small group of people and the armed forces of that province are not big. The situation there can be brought under control within six months.

Thus Yuan still hoped to calm his imperialist masters in order to preserve their faith in him. His announcement of the cancellation of the monarchy on March 21, 1916 was tantamount to an admission of defeat. Even if he had not died soon after (on June 6) he could not have done anything to avert his political downfall.

The imperialist powers had regarded Yuan as a "strong man," much stronger and more useful than the Qing rulers. But events proved that he was less successful in hanging on to power and that when danger stared him in the face he became even more confused than his predecessors.

All this does not mean that Yuan's regime was weaker than the Qing government. What it does mean is that the people were becoming increasingly more conscious. The imperialists chose Yuan as their "strong man," because they banked on his being completely unscrupulous in selling out China. But the more unscrupulously he betrayed the country, the more he incurred the hatred and opposition of the people, and consequently the "strong man" could not help but become a weak one. In this connection, the Japanese seemed to be a little wiser than the other imperialists, because they were the first to see through Yuan's weaknesses. But when they threw Yuan on the garbage heap of history to look for someone "stronger" and more useful, they too made the mistake inevitably committed by all imperialists in their policy towards China.

There may be people who think that Yuan failed ignominiously because he had "unfortunately" chosen to enthrone himself at a time

when the Western powers could not give him their full support. It is true that if he had had more help from the powers, he might have lasted a little longer. But he would not have been able to change the basic law which has governed the whole course of modern Chinese history and which had proved time and again that no reactionary ruler backed by foreigners could last long after his traitorous nature had been exposed. "Strong" as such a ruler might appear for a short time, he would inevitably have to face the resistance of the people, who were growing increasingly conscious. And then no amount of foreign help could save him.

Chapter V
THE "STRONG MAN" (Part Two: 1916-1919)

1. SHADY RELATIONS

In the modern history of China, Yuan Shikai's downfall once more proved that the destiny of China was beyond the control of the imperialist powers, however much they tried to keep the country in chains.

But the revolutionary struggle waged against Yuan Shikai suffered under the burden of the same weakness that had impeded the march of the 1911 Revolution. This struggle too lacked, as Sun Yat-sen had said of the 1911 Revolution, a "well-organized and disciplined party acquainted with its functions and aims." In other words, it was not led by a political party able to rally the broad masses of the people for the explicit objective of fighting imperialism and feudalism.

The Chinese people who were schooled in the uprisings in the last days of the Qing Dynasty and the 1911 Revolution quickly saw through the great usurper, Yuan Shikai. They abandoned all illusions about him and came to detest him whole-heartedly. In many places, both peasants and townsfolk joined spontaneously in the struggle against him. Nevertheless the strong leadership that was needed to guide the struggle could hardly be expected to come from among the people in those days. After the failure of the 1911 Revolution, it became all the more impossible for the national bourgeoisie to lead the struggle for the emancipation of the people, while the proletariat had not yet grown into a full-fledged, independent political force.

After the defeat of the "second revolution" in 1913, Sun Yat-sen fled to Japan, where he organized the Zhonghua Gemingdang

(China Revolutionary Party) for the purpose of carrying on the struggle against Yuan. It had a small membership and confined its activities to purely military adventures. And though politically steadfast in its opposition to Yuan Shikai, it did not raise the question of opposing imperialism.

At the beginning of 1916, Sun Yat-sen returned to China where he issued a declaration which showed that he had advanced further since 1913. It included the following passage:

> Our task of upholding the Republic can by no means be accomplished merely by overthrowing Yuan Shikai. In our fight against the traitor, we must go to great lengths to examine our duties and aims, to understand what we should hold dear, and to set down our policy for the future and for the basic tasks of construction. Only then can our sacrifices in the present struggle be justified.[1]

Sun's viewpoint differed from the demands voiced by democratic revolutionaries in the other political groups opposed to Yuan at that time. But, since the struggle could not stop merely at "overthrowing Yuan Shikai," it was necessary to smash the foundation which gave rise to Yuan's power, that is, to shatter the old social order of feudal rule as well as the foothold of imperialism in China — and this was not yet very clear to Sun Yat-sen.

Later, in 1924, Sun said on the question of opposition to imperialism:

> No one had ever realized the necessity of wiping out such forces (the imperialist forces which gave aid to warlords — *H.S.*). This explains the reason why our revolution is still unsuccessful after all these 13 years (1911-1924 — *H.S.*).[2]

It is thus clear that Sun Yat-sen did not realize the necessity of "wiping out such forces" in the anti-Yuan struggle in 1916. Those who were then engaged in a military struggle against Yuan in Guangdong, Shandong and Hunan provinces and in Shanghai, either under the banner of the Kuomintang or that of the China Revolutionary Party, understood this necessity even less. Under these circumstances, the leadership of the anti-Yuan struggle eventually fell into the hands

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[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 22.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 63.

of a group of northern warlords and political speculators who represented the interests of the big landlord and big capitalist classes.

On December 25, 1915, the Army of National Salvation proclaimed the independence of Yunnan Province. A military government was created under Tang Jiyao, who had been Military Governor of Yunnan under Yuan's rule. Liu Xianshi, commander of the Guizhou provincial troops, and Lu Rongting, Military Governor of Guangxi Province, followed suit. In May 1916, these three provincial leaders, together with Long Jiguang, the ruling warlord of Guangdong Province, organized a military council of the Army of National Salvation with Tang Jiyao as commander-in-chief and Cen Chunxuan as deputy commander-in-chief. Cen Chunxuan had once occupied a high post in the Qing government. He had escorted the Empress Dowager and the Emperor Guang Xu on their flight to Shaanxi during the Yi He Tuan Uprising of 1900, won the favour of the Empress Dowager, and become successively Governor of Shanxi Province, Viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, and President of the Board of Postal Communications. Having fallen out of favour with Yuan Shikai after the proclamation of the republic, he therefore grasped the opportunity to take part in the anti-Yuan campaign and became deputy commander-in-chief while in reality doing the work of the commander-in-chief.

The warlords and bureaucrats of Zhejiang, Shaanxi and Sichuan provinces also declared the areas under their control "independent" and arrogated to themselves the titles of "national salvation heroes." The moving spirit of this "national salvation movement" in the political field was Liang Qichao. This veteran constitutional monarchist had been a mortal enemy of the democratic revolution in the last days of the Qing Dynasty; and during the 1911 Revolution, he was the ideological leader of the constitutional-monarchical clique which abetted Yuan Shikai in throttling the development of the revolution. The Progressive Party he led had all along curried favour with Yuan Shikai and been willing to pick crumbs from his table. But Yuan, who was striving to establish his own dictatorship, threw overboard not only the Kuomintang but the Progressive Party as well. It then dawned on the sly Liang Qichao that Yuan Shikai's

monarchical designs were doomed to be short-lived. He therefore deftly stole a march on Yuan and rallied a group of warlords in the southwestern provinces to wrest power from his hands.

It cannot be denied that the Army of National Salvation movement, receiving the support from the people as it did, reflected the people's hatred for and resistance to Yuan Shikai. It is also true that, among the leaders of this movement, there were quite a few honest and respected figures. But, as its top-ranking leaders were warlords and political reformists, the "national salvation" government had even less to show than the Nanjing government during the 1911 Revolution.

It should be noted, moreover, that the fact that these warlords, bureaucrats and politicians were emboldened to start a campaign against Yuan had something to do with the intrigues of Japanese imperialism. Baron Shinpei Goto (Japanese Foreign Minister in the Terauchi cabinet) subsequently wrote in his *True Facts of the Sino-Japanese Conflict*:

> The government (the Japanese government — *H.S.*) . . . had worked out a plan to create disorders in China, and to stimulate the anti-Yuan movement throughout China. . . . Every outbreak of internal disorders in China, such as the seizure of warships in Shanghai by the "republican party," the revolt in Shandong Province, the mutiny of Yunnan troops, and the recent incident in Manchuria, is directly or indirectly influenced by our country.[1]

This assertion, though somewhat exaggerated, was not altogether baseless. Liang Qichao himself casually revealed his relations with Japanese imperialism in an article which described his activities in the "national salvation movement." It was with the help of the Japanese that he secretly made his way from Shanghai to Guangxi Province in March 1916. He wrote:

> On the first day of the third month by the Lunar Calendar, Lieutenant-General Aoki, the Japanese military attaché in Shanghai, called on me. He seemed to have already heard of my plans, so I spoke my mind freely before him and asked him to help arrange my trip, as I expected my intended journey to be a very difficult one. Aoki generously compli-

[1] Liu Yan, *History of Imperialist Oppression of China* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 79.

> ed with my request and ordered his adjutant, Matsui, to look after me. Matsui came the next day to inform me that as a result of his consultations with Tokyo and Hongkong, he had made arrangements for me to leave Shanghai for Hongkong on the 4th on board *Yokohama-Maru*, and there to take *Myogisan-Maru* for Haiphong. . . . In Hongkong I was interviewed by the Japanese military attaché in Guangzhou, the Japanese consul in Hongkong, and the managers of the branch offices of the Japan Mail Steamship Co. Ltd. (N.Y.K.) and the Mitsui Company, each offering his services. . . . I entrusted the Japanese with the whole job of smuggling me through the ports (because Liang was unable to get a visa for Annam and had to sneak through Haiphong — *H.S.*). Over a dozen Japanese at various ports had a hand in carrying out the plan. The matter received their full attention and they made every effort to help me out. This was because they were acting on instructions from their government.[1]

This reveals how Liang Qichao made his way into Guangxi Province, the stronghold of the "national salvation movement." While passing through Indo-China, he hid for ten days on the estate of a Japanese merchant who had been instructed by the Japanese government to receive him. It was during these days of hiding that Liang Qichao wrote the above passage and frankly jotted down the facts. In his subsequent writings, however, he never alluded to them again.

What prompted imperialist Japan to do all this? The answer is given in the documents of the Black Dragon Society, quoted earlier in this book. But to think that the anti-Yuan campaign was an out-and-out result of Japanese instigation is to admit the fantastic claim of the imperialists. As a matter of fact, it is clear that both the imperialists and the reformists of the big landlord class and big bourgeoisie considered it opportune to fish in troubled waters after the broad masses of the people had already risen against Yuan Shikai. The reformists who had differentiated themselves from the ruling strata were the ones the imperialists wanted to make use of. Siding with the big landlord class and big bourgeoisie, while professing to be revolutionaries, they never renounced their shady relations with imperialism. They worked hand in glove with imperialism not merely for the purpose of overthrowing Yuan Shikai, but to stem the advance of the people's revolution.

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[1] *A Collection of the Works of Liang Qichao* (in Chinese), pp. 122-124.

On the occasion of its inauguration, the Yunnan "national salvation" government addressed a declaration to foreign countries, couched in terms similar to those in the declaration made by the Nanjing government during the 1911 Revolution.

> . . . As a result of Yuan's persistent perfidy in the field of foreign policy, China has lost its prestige in the eyes of all the nations of the world. Friendly foreign powers have shown great concern over our country's inevitable disaster. But Yuan does not repent. . . . He oppresses the people on the one hand, and cheats the friendly powers on the other. . . . It is sincerely hoped that all friendly powers will sympathize with us, support our aims, and respect our just action. We hereby solemnly declare that all treaties entered into with foreign countries prior to our announcement of the expedition against the wicked despot Yuan Shikai, i.e. prior to December 1915, will remain valid. The lives and property of foreign nationals as well as their business and churches in the areas under the jurisdiction of our army will be fully protected. All treaty obligations will be observed.[1]

We need only point out, without going into details, that in May 1915, seven months before this declaration, Yuan Shikai had accepted the Twenty-one Demands presented by Japan. The people throughout China had condemned this traitorous treaty as utterly unacceptable; but now the "national salvation" government, in its declaration, considered it "valid" along with other treaties. Not having the courage to condemn Yuan's foreign policy as treason to the country, it merely claimed that he "cheats friendly powers." Accordingly, it dared not repudiate all the traitorous treaties entered into by Yuan's government. The "national salvation" government seemed to be trying to prove, in its declaration, that it would observe treaties more faithfully than the "persistently perfidious" government of Yuan Shikai.

The same fate that befell the Nanjing government in 1912 claimed the "national salvation" government as well. Though anxious to create a faithful servant in China, imperialist Japan insisted that any candidate for this job should be militarily "strong" enough to "hold down" China. On the one hand, the "national salvation" government tried to flirt with Japanese imperialists. For instance, Liang

[1] *History of the Revolution and National Reconstruction of China*, compiled by the Datong Institute (in Chinese), Vol. 3, pp. 149-150.

Qichao left Guangxi for Shanghai shortly after the inauguration of the "military council" in May 1916. Speaking afterwards of this trip, Liang said vaguely: "With the situation in Guangdong and Guangxi back to normal, I returned to Shanghai to engage in other activities." But a telegram dispatched by Li Genyuan, deputy chief of staff of the "military council," revealed the real reason of Liang's trip: "Liang Qichao started yesterday for Japan *via* Shanghai to discuss diplomatic problems and foreign loans." On the other hand, the "national salvation" government tried to ingratiate itself with Feng Guozhang and Duan Qirui, two influential generals under Yuan Shikai, who had their own selfish designs and were looking for an opportunity to repeat the manoeuvre of Yuan Shikai during the 1911 Revolution, i.e. to take political power into their own hands. This was particularly true of Duan Qirui, who had long established connections with Japan. He was regarded by Japanese imperialists as the ideal person to succeed Yuan Shikai, because he was in a position to control the Beiyang army, Yuan's heritage. The other powers too did not oppose Duan's candidacy. When Yuan died, Duan assumed power and the "national salvation" government was thus cheated of its prize. But since its existence had not been motivated by any far-reaching revolutionary ideal, it was content to receive the consolation of a grant of "military funds" from the Duan government, after which it disbanded itself. Some of the warlords and bureaucrats who had participated in it were content to retain control over a province or an area where they waited for fresh opportunities to strike out anew. And politicians like Liang Qichao made haste to pay court to Duan Qirui.

After Yuan's death, Li Yuanhong became president, and Duan Qirui premier. The real power of government, however, lay in Duan's hands. With the Army of National Salvation disbanded, the warlord government of Beijing "unified" China once again. Duan's dynasty supplanted that of Yuan. Although the imperialists had lost one puppet, they found another.

The root cause of Yuan's defeat was that the Chinese people were determined not to put up with despotic and traitorous rule any

longer. But the imperialists, in league with the warlords and politicians, once again twisted the people's demands to suit their own plots. The result was that, after Yuan's death, the Chinese people continued to live under the yoke of international imperialism and domestic warlords. Was this all that the "people's success" really meant? Would it be possible for the people to find a path which they could really call their own?

Just one year after Duan Qirui seized the reins of government, the Great October Socialist Revolution, which ushered in a new era in the history of mankind, broke out in Russia. Two years later, in 1919, under the influence of the October Revolution, the May Fourth Movement broke out in China. The road along which the Chinese people advanced was certainly a difficult and tortuous one. But at every turn of this tortuous road the people advanced a step further in their political consciousness. All the trials and privations they endured only served to temper their strength. Following the 1911 Revolution, the rule of Yuan Shikai, the anti-Yuan struggle, and the rule of Duan Qirui, the May Fourth Movement that finally burst upon this vast land, showed that the Chinese people had reached a new peak in their political consciousness, just as the 1911 Revolution had marked the peak reached by the people during the last days of Qing rule. For a long time before 1919 the imperialists and their agents appeared to be the sole actors dominating the political stage of China, while the strength of the people seemed to be a hardly noticeable undercurrent. But on the eve of the May Fourth Movement the main stream of the people's revolution had already begun to gather momentum.

2. DUAN QIRUI AND JAPAN

Duan Qirui was already one of Yuan Shikai's trusted lieutenants when the latter was training the army at Xiaozhan. During the 1911 Revolution, he worked hard to help Yuan climb to power. After Yuan had become president, Duan held the post of War Minister in many successive cabinets. Military power was gradually concentrated

in his hands, and this aroused Yuan Shikai's fears. So Duan was "retired" at the end of 1915, sharing the same lot that had befallen Yuan in the last days of the Qing Dynasty. But when Yuan Shikai encountered difficulties and was forced to abandon his plan of restoring the monarchy, he recalled Duan Qirui, appointing him chief of staff and later asking him to form a cabinet. On Yuan Shikai's death, Duan took over the reins of government, following the style of Li Hongzhang and Yuan Shikai. Though he never became president but only premier — and did not hold this post without interruption — he had the Beijing government under his thumb until July 1920. And in 1924 he returned to power once again.

The imperialists acclaimed Duan Qirui as a "strongman," just as they had done Yuan Shikai, and even considered him "stronger." Examining the relative strength between the administration headed by President Li Yuanhong and Duan Qirui on the one hand and the preceding Yuan Shikai regime on the other, W. R. Wheeler said in one of his dispatches in February 1917 that "experienced foreigners" considered the Li-Duan government stronger, quoting a statement by Putnam Weale, a British author then in Beijing, to the effect that "President Li Yuanhong's seven months' quiet tenure of office has indeed brought the prospects of ultimate success much nearer than it was at any time under Yuan Shikai's so-called iron rule. . . ."[1] This indicates that this new government was highly regarded by the Western powers.

The relations between President Li Yuanhong and Premier Duan Qirui, however, were not harmonious. In the spring of 1917, they disagreed on the question of China's entry into World War I. Duan strongly advocated China's participation in the war. Li, supported by the parliament, tried to oust Duan, who was backed by influential Beiyang warlords. Duan refused to give way. Then the warlord Zhang Xun ordered his army into Beijing, forced Li to dissolve the parliament, drove the President from office and farcically "restored" the Qing boy-emperor to "his throne." Duan Qirui, who was privy to this plot, took advantage of it to remove the ob-

[1] Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

durate Li Yuanhong and dissolve the recalcitrant parliament. Having achieved this, he also threw Zhang Xun out and put an end to the "restoration," claiming that he had "suppressed treason" and bestowing on himself the title of "hero-saviour of the republic." All this helped Duan further to concentrate political power in his own hands. By July 1917, all his plans having worked out beautifully, he installed another Beiyang warlord, Feng Guozhang, as president and continued to dominate the government in the capacity of premier.

Japan regarded the Duan Qirui clique as being firmly in its grip. The Western powers, then occupied with the war in Europe, were in no position to meddle in the affairs of the East. Aiming at hegemony in China, Japan exerted every effort to build up Duan Qirui's power. While Duan, striving for foreign support which would help him in the "unification of China by force," surrendered completely to Japanese imperialism and became an open traitor. In 1917-1918, during the two years preceding the May Fourth Movement, China was almost entirely under the domination of Japanese imperialism and its protégés, Duan's warlord clique. This state of affairs in China prevailed up to October 1918, just before the end of World War I, when it began to change.

During 1917-1918, taking advantage of World War I and resorting to extremely vile and vicious methods, the Japanese imperialists took Duan's clique completely in hand and established exclusive control over China. To facilitate its financial investments in Duan's administration, the Japanese Terauchi cabinet first expanded the activities in China of three Japanese banks — the Bank of Taiwan, the Bank of Chosen and the Industrial Bank of Japan — and later established a consortium which functioned under Japanese government control. It also set up the Exchange Bank of China which purported to be a joint Sino-Japanese enterprise, with the pro-Japanese politician, Lu Zongyu, as general manager. Through these banking houses Japan began, in the latter part of 1917, to advance loans to Duan's cabinet. The total sum of these loans, made in accordance with the agreements concluded between Japan and Duan

Qirui, exceeded 500 million yen. Having made such large investments Japan reaped tremendous profits.

As for Duan Qirui he was simply bartering away China's rights piecemeal. Under different names, he contracted some loans from Japan by mortgaging the Bank of Communications, a bank closely connected with China's national treasury. In return for others, he sold out railways, mines and forests in the Northeast and Mongolia. Further loans were guaranteed by the revenues from the Grand Canal, the stamp tax and native customs; yet others, by handing over to Japan the telegraph and radiograph services throughout the country. Duan's government also obtained a loan by recognizing Japan's special privileges in Shandong Province. Japan wanted to take over Germany's previous position in that province after World War I, to obtain the right to station troops at Qingdao and along the Qingdao-Jinan Railway as well as the right of civil administration over this port and railway and to extend these privileges further. The only thing Duan's government cared about was to get money, and its Minister to Japan was ordered to "accept gladly" the Japanese terms. Later at the Paris Peace Conference, these words of the Chinese Minister to Japan were quoted by the Japanese delegate in support of Japan's claims. This revelation aroused the indignation of the patriotic Chinese against the traitorous officials.

In addition to the above mentioned, two other loans were contracted in arms instead of money and they were called the "arms loans." The arms were naturally meant to help Duan Qirui wage the civil war that was raging continuously in China. Knowledge of the "arms loans" was kept from the public at that time, for Duan feared they would arouse open opposition. Finally there was the so-called "loan for China's participation in the World War," nominally to cover expenses connected with the training of Chinese contingents to take part in World War I, but actually to fan the flames of civil war in China.

All this shows that Duan Qirui far excelled Yuan Shikai in selling out China's national interests. The Twenty-one Demands submitted to Yuan Shikai included one demanding the right for Japan to control the Chinese army and police — which Yuan dared not

accept. Now from the hands of Duan Qirui, Japan easily obtained the right to send its officers to train the Chinese army in return for the $20,000,000, "loan for China's participation in the World War." Cen Chunxuan, a political rival of Duan Qirui, castigated him in the following terms:

> It is strange that this army (meaning the "army to take part in the World War," which formed the nucleus of Duan's forces — *H.S.*) should be trained by Japanese officers. It is said that among these Japanese there are several hundred non-commissioned officers. The training of the national army of an independent country by a great number of foreign officers is indeed a rare phenomenon. Such a thing usually happens only in protectorates or colonies.[1]

But this was not all. The Beijing government also invited to China a large number of important Japanese "advisers," among them the "financial adviser" Sakatani, the "political adviser" Ariga and the "military adviser" Aoki. No wonder that Terauchi boasted after he had stepped down as Japanese prime minister:

> The Twenty-one Demands presented to China by the Okuma cabinet aroused the resentment of the entire Chinese people without bringing any substantial benefit to Japan. During my tenure of office, the total sum of the loans granted to China was three times greater than that of all the previous loans, but they brought Japan ten times more benefit than did the Twenty-one Demands.[2]

After the imperialists certainly reaped immense profits from the money they had spent in fostering reactionary regimes in China!

The October Revolution in Russia broke out in 1917, Russia withdrew from the imperialist war. The imperialist powers attempted to stifle the newly-born Soviet state by armed intervention, and this situation was again exploited by Japan to further its aims in China. On the pretext of conduction joint military activities in Russia, Japan opened negotiations with Duan's government, leading to the conclusion, in May 1918, of the Sino-Japanese "Military Agreement" and "Naval Agreement." The provisions of these agreements enabled the Japanese army to swarm into China under the "legitimate"

[1] See *History of Imperialist Oppression of China* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 135.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 137.

pretext of "military co-operation" and to assume control of China's Northeast as well as China's military organs. To obtain Japanese loans and military aid, Duan's government not only agreed to provide these occupation troops, which came for such "co-operation," with all facilities and ample supplies, but even sent troops to follow the Japanese army into Siberia. These Chinese soldiers, under the command of Japanese General Otani, actually became the colonial troops of Japanese imperialism. As events proved, foreign intervention in the Russian revolution failed, and the Japanese army evacuated Siberia. But from that time on China's Northeast came under the domination of the Japanese army. This was the outcome of the anti-Soviet adventure which Duan Qirui undertook in the wake of the imperialists.

Duan Qirui, however, was happy. The "army to take part in the World War," trained with Japanese assistance, became his military bulwark. The incessant flow of loans from Japan supplied him with funds to buy over various bureaucrats and politicians and to organize the "Anfu Club," which became his political mainstay. Many financial magnates, politicians and public figures — members of the "New Jiaotong Clique," "Old Jiaotong Clique" and "Research Clique" danced attendance upon him. The "Research Clique" was another name for the Progressive Party in Yuan Shikai's days, with Liang Qichao still at its helm. In 1917, Liang Qichao joined Duan's cabinet as Minister of Finance and personally took part in contracting several loans from Japan. Liang and other influential members of the "Research Clique" who entered Duan Qirui's cabinet and shared the profits of treason with him bore an equal responsibility for betraying the country's interests. This was the nature of the deal which they covered up by the phrase "coalition cabinet." How low they had sunk!

The growth of Duan's power dissatisfied a number of provincial warlords, especially those of the southwestern provinces who had raised the "anti-Yuan national salvation" banner and who were now cold-shouldered by the new government. Taking advantage of the fact that Duan had failed to convoke parliament after Zhang

Xun's farcical attempt to "restore the Qing throne" in 1917, they gave vent to their indignation. The Yunnan Military Governor Tang Jiyao was the first to come forward with the slogan "Defend the constitution!" and to circulate telegrams advocating the convocation of the old parliament in order to "uphold constitutional government." The warlords in Guangdong, Guangxi and Sichuan provinces gave him their support and declared their provinces independent. A number of former members of parliament thrust aside by Duan Qirui flocked to Guangzhou. There they organized a military government and proclaimed Sun Yat-sen "generalissimo."

Sun Yat-sen, who maintained his position as a revolutionary democrat and realized as early as during the anti-Yuan campaign that no other warlord of Yuan's type should be allowed to rise to power, was naturally against Duan Qirui's government as well. But when he joined the Guangzhou "constitutional government" he found himself trapped in an encirclement of ambitious warlords and frustrated politicians. In May 1918, he resigned his post and left for Shanghai. The military government in Guangzhou was reorganized and the veteran politician Cen Chunxuan became its new leader. In Shanghai, Sun Yat-sen recalled the circumstances in which he served as generalissimo of the Guangzhou government: "For a year I encountered immense difficulties without anybody to help me. My staying on would only evoke the regrets of my friends and the joy of my enemies."[1]

The warlords and bureaucrats in Guangzhou while claiming that they were defending the constitution were in reality only interested in the struggle against the northern government because they wanted to grasp some benefits from it. They were not interested in the revolution itself. In their endeavours to win favour from foreign imperialism, they revealed that they and the northern government were birds of a feather. Duan Qirui who was confident of remaining the favourite of Japanese imperialists ignored the southwestern "constitutional government" and paid no attention to its demand to reconvene parliament. On the contrary, in August 1918, Duan created

[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 175.

a new parliament which was entirely controlled by the Anfu Club and which came to be known as the Anfu Parliament. He resorted to arms to liquidate the "constitutional government" in the South, and openly proclaimed his policy of "unification of China by force." Behind the civil war between the South and the North that continued to rage without letup in 1917 and 1918 could be seen the ugly hand of Japanese imperialists.

In October 1918, when World War I was about to end, Duan Qirui was still at the zenith of his power. He had a hand-picked parliament which served his aims, and his "army to take part in the World War" was continually being reinforced by new recruits. Although he threw up his premiership in November, in his capacity as commander-in-chief of the "army to take part in the World War," Duan Qirui still had tremendous power. The military agreements signed by him and Japan were to expire at the end of World War I, but in February 1919 they were extended by mutual agreement. Naturally this was to the advantage both of Japan and of Duan Qirui.

3. RIVALRY BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

It was inevitable that the hegemony established in China by imperialist Japan should arouse the jealousy of the Western powers. But none of the European powers, locked in the imperialist war since 1914, was in a position to challenge Japan in the Far East. For instance, Germany's rights in China were seized by Japan soon after the outbreak of the war. Britain, France and other Allied countries endeavoured to drag China into the war in order to make use of its manpower and material resources. Consequently, in February and March 1917, Britain, Russia, France and Italy hinted to Japan that they would support its claims in Shandong if Japan helped them induce China to participate in the war. The United States, as the last power to enter the war (in April 1917), was alone in a position to challenge Japan.

The rivalry between Japan and the United States on the Chinese question had been growing increasingly acute since 1900 (see

Chapter III, Section 5). During Yuan Shikai's rule, the two countries were engaged in a covert struggle (see Chapter IV, Section 4). It was only after a bitter conflict that Japanese imperialists succeeded in establishing control over Duan Qirui's government. In 1916, the United States granted two loans to the Chinese warlord government, each amounting to U.S. $5,000,000. The first, in the first half of the year, was to the tottering Yuan Shikai regime; the other, in the second half of the year, was to Duan Qirui. At that time the United States made no small effort to ingratiate itself with the new warlord government in China. Let us read the opinion that American Minister Paul S. Reinsch held about Duan Qirui:

> . . . Despite his real indolence, his wisdom, his fundamental honesty, and his readiness to shield his subordinates and to assume responsibility himself have made this quiet and unobtrusive man the most prominent leader among the Chinese militarists. His interest centres chiefly in the education of military officers. He is no politician and is bored by political theory. He is always ready to turn over the handling of affairs to subordinates, by whom he is often led into a course which he might not himself have chosen. This, coupled with extraordinary stubbornness, accounts for his influence often tending to be disastrous to his country. His personality, however, with its simplicity and pensiveness, and his real wisdom when he lets his own nature guide him, make him one of the attractive figures of China.[1]

Thus have the imperialists always lauded the reactionary military rulers of China!

In February 1917, the United States severed diplomatic relations with Germany. The U.S. Minister in China, Paul S. Reinsch, and other American agents lost no time in trying to influence the Beijing government to take concerted action with the United States. No sooner had the Beijing government followed in the steps of the United States and broken off relations with Germany, than the Japanese Minister protested, stating that, while endorsing the action taken by the Beijing government, Japan "deeply regretted" that it had not been consulted beforehand on a matter of such vital importance. In fact, Beijing's action was viewed by the United States as a diplomatic victory in China. After the Beijing government entered the im-

[1] MacNair, *op. cit.*, p. 820.

perialist war, Japan and the United States vied with each other in claiming that this was the result of their efforts. When Duan Qirui re-entered Beijing in July 1917, after Zhang Xun's attempt to restore the Qing throne had ended in an abject failure, Japan, the United States and Britain simultaneously sent armed units to Beijing. All this was of course only a side-show to the Japanese-American scramble for political control over China.

The United States, especially so after it had itself entered the war, found it more and more difficult to pay adequate attention to the Far East, as it was busy in Europe. After the October Revolution in 1917, the American reactionaries felt the need of getting Japan to take part in the intervention aimed at the destruction of the new-born Soviet state, and in the early part of November 1917, the United States reached an agreement with Japan (the Lansing-Ishii Notes), under which the United States recognized Japan's "special interests" in China in return for Japan's tacit recognition of American rights there. The United States and other Western powers connived with Japan when in 1918 the latter and Duan Qirui's government concluded the Sino-Japanese Military Agreement which had a twofold aim: to tighten Japan's control over China and to help in the organization of the intervention in the Russian revolution. This shows that, notwithstanding the disputes which periodically arose from their scramble for rights in China, there were times when Japan and the United States, for one reason or another, reached agreement at the expense of China's rights and interests.

When in the closing stages of World War I in 1918, the victorious Allies were planning the post-war world order, they naturally did not leave vast, semi-colonial China out of their calculations. The United States, which had suffered the least and profited the most from the war, took particular and most active interest in this question. As a first step, in May and June 1918, it organized 36 American banks (to which seven others were added later) to make investments in China under the direction of the Washington government. On July 10, the United States proposed to the Japanese, Brit-

ish and French governments jointly to form an international consortium for China.

In the first few years after the 1911 Revolution, we may recall, the Six-Power Consortium had also been organized on the initiative of the United States. But with the subsequent withdrawal of the United States, it had become a Five-Power Consortium of Britain, Japan, France, Russia and Germany. This, however, had disintegrated during the war and Japan had established a monopolistic control over China's finances. The fact that the United States came forward with a new proposal for the revival of the international consortium in 1918 clearly showed its intention of gaining a dominant position in China by calling its huge financial power into play. It was an express condition of the new American proposal that the participating powers should transfer to the consortium all their preferences and options for existing and future loans. This was a warning to Japan: "Disgorge everything you have swallowed and let each of us enjoy 'equal opportunity.'"

In addition to using its financial power, the United States resorted to a dexterous political fraud. On its entry into the war, it had loudly proclaimed itself in favour of "the right of national self-determination" in order to win the goodwill of the peoples in the East. At the same time, it spared no effort to buy over the "liberals" from among the Chinese officials and politicians to spread pro-American sentiments. The Beijing government, though held in leash by Japan, also sought to establish some sort of friendly ties with the United States. Certain important members of the "constitutional government" in the South were flirting with the United States too. The pro-American utterances made at that time arouse our disgust today. For instance:

1. In July 1917, Wu Tingfang (Minister for Foreign Affairs in Duan Qirui's government and later an important figure in the "constitutional government" in the South) said: "I hope to see the day when the Stars and Stripes and five-coloured flag of China will be intertwined in an everlasting friendship."

2. In the same year, Wellington Koo (then Beijing government's Minister to the United States) made a speech in New York in

which he lauded American relations with China in the past as a paragon of dealings between two countries. He said: "Between China and the United States, for instance, we have a concrete example of how two nations, always basing their mutual intercourse on justice, could get along in cordial relationship and in perfect understanding."

3. Another Chinese politician Wang Zhengting (a member of parliament who later joined the "constitutional government") openly begged, in a speech delivered in August 1917, for America's political, financial, industrial and technical assistance. In his speech, he quoted the words of T. F. Millard, an American journalist and advocate of an active United States policy in China: "If this leads to quasi-interference in Chinese politics, then that responsibility must be faced." Wang Zhengting added that he "entirely agreed" with Millard's view.[1]

Such was the shamelessness with which the vile politicians of the big landlord class and big bourgeoisie toadied to American imperialism!

Millard whose views were supported by Wang Zhengting was the founder of *Millard's Review,* an English-language journal published in Shanghai. In his journal he campaigned for the idea that it was the duty of the United States to sustain "republicanism" in Russia and China. He wrote:

> Action to hearten, encourage, and support Russia already has been taken by the United States Government. Action to hearten, encourage, and support China in her effort to maintain a republic ought to be devised and undertaken without delay.[2]

How did the United States government support "republicanism" in Russia? The United States together with other imperialist powers organized armed intervention against the Russian revolution, supporting the white-guard generals. And how did the United States government support "republicanism" in China? It made plans, as mentioned above, to challenge Japan in order to establish its own domination over China after World War I.

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[1] See Wheeler, *op. cit.,* p. 98, p. 154, p. 174.

[2] *Ibid.,* p. 101.

The imperialists knew perfectly well that it was not enough to rely on a handful of bureaucrats and politicians and that they had to find "strong men" possessing real power to serve them as agents. Since Duan Qirui was already entirely in Japan's clutches, the Western powers were faced with the necessity of grooming their own "strong men." The members of the "constitutional government" in the South were not considered good enough to receive this "special favour." So, just as Yuan Shikai had been found to step into Li Hongzhang's shoes, and Duan Qirui into Yuan Shikai's, the Western powers now looked around for suitable candidates from among the "legitimate" group which held real power — the Beiyang warlord clique. Then the Beiyang warlord clique was itself torn by dissension when Duan Qirui and President Feng Guozhang no longer saw eye to eye. After Duan had formed his "Anfu Parliament" in 1918, he forced Feng Guozhang to give up his office and "elected" another old bureaucrat, Xu Shichang, president. After this the warlords of the Feng Guozhang clique such as Cao Kun, Wu Peifu and others began gradually to turn away from Duan Qirui. Unceasing bickering and rifts among the warlords over spoils were of course not surprising. But that this rift among the Beiyang warlords should have become acute at a time when the United States was intensifying its aggression against China in the post-war years and was looking for new agents in China, was no accident. We shall have occasion to see how the Zhili clique under Feng Guozhang became an instrument of U.S.-British imperialists, fostered in opposition to Duan Qirui's clique which was a tool of imperialist Japan.

Having prepared itself well in every possible way, the United States was now ready for the "show-down" with Japan. The China question, when it came up at the Paris Peace Conference which opened at the beginning of 1919, was one round of the duel between the two. But neither was strong enough to dictate to the other and the outcome was an agreement to divide the spoils through mutual concessions which only portended a more intense rivalry between Japan and the United States in the future. At the same time, this international duel at the expense of China touched off the great people's movement of May Fourth 1919 — which demonstrated that

the Chinese people were rising to a new level of awakening and were about to embark on new actions.

We can see, therefore, that at the time of the birth of the May Fourth Movement the Chinese nation was confronted with an extremely grave crisis. On the one hand, Japan had gained a firm foothold in China. On the other, the American, British and other imperialists were making fresh attempts to improve their positions and to catch up with Japan. They were bent on summoning all the forces at their disposal to subjugate, carve up and dominate China. Moreover, they had groomed and were grooming a host of hardened agents to hold the whip hand over the Chinese people. Among themselves, the imperialists fumed, fought and sometimes composed their differences — invariably at the expense of China.

4. THE MAINSTREAM OF THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION

World War I presented Chinese national industries — such as the textile, flour, silk, match, and other light industries — with an opportunity for vigorous development as competition from European and American capital temporarily lessened. The national bourgeoisie began to grow in strength. Simultaneously the strength of the proletariat grew even faster (taking into account also the number of workers in Japanese-owned factories). Thus, the Chinese people's revolutionary movement acquired a more solid social foundation.

Among the intellectuals who were searching for a way out for their country, doubts and vexation mounted. They had always tried to learn from Western bourgeois-democratic culture, but, as Chairman Mao said in *On the People's Democratic Dictatorship*:

> Imperialist aggression shattered the fond dreams of the Chinese about learning from the West. It was very odd — why were the teachers always committing aggression against their pupils? The Chinese learned a good deal from the West, but they could not make it work and were never able to realize their ideals.[1]

[1] Mao Zedong, *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Beijing, 1961, Vol. IV, p. 413.

The great victory of the October Socialist Revolution in Russia, in spite of the imperialist black-out on news, had immediate repercussions in China. It so effectively breached the world imperialist front, and aroused such hatred and consternation on the part of all the imperialist powers, that it could not but capture the attention of the Chinese people who were writhing under the iron heel of imperialist powers. Its repercussions were first felt in China in the ideological field. Almost all the intellectuals who were seriously concerned with the destiny of the nation began to watch the development of the revolution in Russia and eagerly sought acquaintance with the socialist ideology — Marxism-Leninism — by which this revolution was guided.

Although there was no conspicuous popular movement in 1917-18, there was every indication that the Chinese people's patriotism and their democratic movement were crying for more forceful expression.

When Duan Qirui assumed power, he could not hoodwink the people into cherishing illusions about him as Yuan Shikai had done in his day. Nobody could be found to say "China cannot do without Duan." At the beginning of 1917, the talk of China's participation in the World War stirred the people. The sedulous efforts of Duan's clique to drag China into the slaughter, initiated by the very powers which had jointly trampled upon China, only served to arouse popular opposition. Gradually the truth leaked out. The reason why Duan's clique of warlords was so enthusiastic about participating in the World War was that it wished to use this pretext to get loans from Japan; and people soon got wind of the fact that a military agreement with Japan, the terms of which were extremely harsh, was also being negotiated. Duan's true character was thus fully exposed.

Duan counted on China's participation in the World War to cover up his traitorous scheme to achieve a dictatorship, but this conspiracy failed — faster than anyone expected. After the conclusion of various loan agreements and the military agreement with Japan in May 1918, strict measures were taken to prevent any leakage of the news. But the cat was already out of the bag. Public

opinion throughout the country and various people's organizations protested against the terms of the military agreement, pointing out that they were even harsher than those contained in the Twenty-one Demands accepted by Yuan Shikai. On May 12, Chinese students who had been studying in Japan went on strike and returned to China, where they organized a national salvation league to oppose the Sino-Japanese Military Agreement. On May 18, 1918, the *Peking Gazette,* an English-language newspaper published By Eugene Chen, carried an editorial entitled "Selling Out China!" which openly condemned Duan's government. Eugene Chen was arrested and the newspaper banned. On May 21, the students of Beijing University and other colleges and schools proceeded to the president's office to petition for the abrogation of the Sino-Japanese Military Agreement. Students throughout the country echoed their support. Anti-Japanese and anti-Duan sentiments of the Chinese people were growing against the Japan-Duan collaboration.

During this period, the Chinese people not only saw through the plots of imperialist Japan but also began to understand the true features of the Western powers, including the United States.

Once on the side of the Allied Powers, the Beijing government followed the imperialist countries in hypocritical mouthings about "justice," "righteousness," "humanity," and so on. But they could not make the people believe this propaganda. In the first place, Japan was one of the "Allied Powers," and, secondly, all the other "Allied Powers" too had committed bloody and criminal aggressions against China. What was more, China had just learned a fresh lesson. When the Beijing government approached the powers on the question of China's entry into the war, it submitted certain demands as the conditions for its participation. These included the revision of customs tariffs, postponement of payment of "Boxer" indemnities and revision of the "Protocol of 1901" concerning the stationing of foreign troops in the Beijing-Tianjin area. All these demands, very moderate in character, were rejected out of hand. The British imperialist newspaper *North-China Daily News* commented that since the "Protocol of 1901" was intended to teach the Chinese "never to forget" the lesson of the 'Boxer" Uprising, it should not be mod-

ified. It added that for the sake of giving some consolation to the Chinese, certain modifications might be made on minor points after China's entry into the war.[1]

The warlord regime dared not challenge the arrogance and insults of the imperialists and was willing to act as a pawn in the imperialist war. The people, however, learned a lesson.

In this period, the U.S. imperialists were most successful in gaining a certain audience for the croakings of its glib-tongued propagandists — but only for a while. The myth they were trying to build up exploded with the conclusion of Lansing-Ishii Agreement in November 1917. Even pro-American officials and politicians found it hard to explain away the fact that the U.S. had openly recognized Japan's "special interests" in China. Nevertheless, we must admit that, even to the end of World War I, the deceptive influence of U.S. imperialism remained very strong among the Chinese intellectuals.

In January 1918, President Wilson of the United States announced his high-sounding Fourteen Points for the forthcoming peace settlement: democracy, freedom, national self-determination, and so forth. So at the beginning of 1919, when the Paris Peace Conference was held under the auspices of the United States, many persons among the Chinese bourgeoisie and intellectuals were naïve enough to cherish the illusion that this time the powers, guided by the principle of "justice," would "restore" to China its independence and freedom. Urged and encouraged by the people, the delegates sent to the Paris Peace Conference by the Beijing government submitted demands for the abolition of the spheres of influence, withdrawal of foreign troops and police, tariff autonomy, and abrogation of the Twenty-one Demands accepted by the Yuan Shikai government. These demands, however, were never discussed at a plenary session of the conference, having already been rejected by the Supreme Council of Five — U.S.A., Britain, Japan, France and Italy — to which they were first referred, on the grounds that the Paris Peace Conference was not competent to discuss them. Rebuffed, the Chinese delegates could

[1] See *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 61.

only muster up their courage to present the question of Germany's pre-war "special rights" in Shandong and to demand their abrogation. But even this was turned down. The Japanese delegate said that the Chinese government had already agreed to transfer Germany's "special rights" in Shandong to Japan, and added that he could produce China's reply which contained the words "gladly accept." Britain, France and Italy said that, during the war, they had promised to support Japan's claims to Shandong and that they could not break their word. The United States said that, as things were, it could do nothing.

It thus became clear to the Chinese people that the United States and the other Allied Powers were working hand in glove. The clauses of the peace treaty concerning the Shandong question were finally written entirely according to the wishes of Japan. The powers pressed China to agree and sign, but public opinion in China was in an uproar. The Beijing warlord regime, accustomed as it was to selling out the country, considered it desirable to sign the treaty. A circular telegram was sent by the Beijing government to the provinces, stating:

> To accommodate public opinion, the government may refuse to sign the treaty. But, weighing the advantages and disadvantages, we hold that we will run into difficulties if we do not sign it now. . . . Should unruly elements attempt to use the pretext to instigate troubles, you are to use all available means to prevent disturbances.[1]

In the circumstances it is all too apparent that, were it not for the great May Fourth Movement launched by China's patriotic youth, were it not for the struggle waged by the people against the government which had betrayed the country and against the imperialists' spoils-dividing peace treaty, the Beijing government would have signed another document selling out the country's birthright.

The fact that the May Fourth Movement occurred in the wake of the imperialist war and the Great October Socialist Revolution showed clearly that the Chinese people's struggle against imperialism had reached a new stage.

[1] Liu Yen, *History of Imperialist Oppression of China* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 192.

Lenin said:

> The imperialist war of 1914-18 very clearly revealed the falsity of the bourgeois-democratic phrase mongering to all nations and to the oppressed classes of the whole world by practically demonstrating that the Versailles Treaty of the famous "Western democracies" is an even more brutal and despicable act of violence against weak nations than was the Brest-Litvosk Treaty of the German Junkers and the Kaiser. The League of Nations and the whole postwar policy of the Entente reveal this truth more clearly and distinctly than ever; they are everywhere intensifying the revolutionary struggle both of the proletariat in the advanced countries and of the masses of the working people in the colonies and dependent countries, and are hastening the collapse of the petty-bourgeois national illusion that nations can live together in peace and equality under capitalism.[1]

In shattering all illusions about imperialism, the Great October Socialist Revolution showed the people the way to struggle to break away from the clutches of imperialism and gave them confidence in victory. Stalin pointed out in 1918:

> And indeed, the October Revolution is the first revolution in world history to break the age-long sleep of the labouring masses of the oppressed peoples of the East and to draw them into the fight against world imperialism.[2]

In the November 1918 issue of *The New Youth*,[3] Li Dazhao,[4] on the basis of the development of his political ideas at that time, wrote an article on the conclusion of World War I and the triumph of the October Revolution:

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[1] Lenin, "Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLPH, Moscow, 1952, Vol. II, Part 2, pp. 463-464.

[2] J. Stalin, "The October Revolution and the National Question," *Works*, Eng. ed., FLPH, Moscow, 1953, Vol. IV, p. 167.

[3] The magazine *The New Youth*, which first appeared in September 1915, was the first to raise the clarion call to combat feudalism and initiate an ideological movement to promote science and democracy. After the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917, it reflected the socialist trends among the progressive intellectuals of China. After 1920, it began to disseminate Marxism in China under the guidance of the Chinese Communists of the time.

[4] Li Dazhao (1888-1927) — one of the earliest Chinese Marxists and a founder of the Communist Party of China. Arrested by the Fengtian warlord Zhang Zuolin, he died a martyr's death in April 1927.

> Greeting the momentous changes in the world situation, we are happy not just for any one country or any particular section of the population of certain countries, but for the new day that has dawned for all mankind. We are not celebrating the victory of the military power of one side over that of another, but, rather the victory of democracy over autocracy, the victory of socialism over militarism (imperialism — *H.S.*).[1]

There was no preventing the birth of a new ear. It had to come. The road ahead might be strewn with obstacles and difficulties for the Chinese people. But now, as never before, they faced the future with renewed and unparalleled confidence and strength.

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[1] *The New Youth* (in Chinese), Vol. 5, No. 5.

Chapter VI
REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION (1919-1924)

1. PATRIOTIC MOVEMENTS (1919-1921) AFTER MAY FOURTH

An article, summarizing the achievements of the people's May Fourth Movement, published on its sixth anniversary in 1925 in the *Guide*, organ of the Communist Party of China, concluded with the following words:

> On the one hand, the May Fourth Movement was launched against the treacherous and pro-Japanese bureaucrats and warlords — the Anfu clique of Cao Rulin, Zhang Zongxiang, Lu Zongyu and others. It took the form of the revolutionary masses taking direct action to strike blows at these reactionaries. On the other hand, it demanded in clear terms the abrogation of the Twenty-one Demands and the return to China of Qingdao. Consequently, the movement changed the situation in which both the reactionaries and the revolutionaries had vied with each other since the 1911 Revolution in "protecting the lives and property of foreigners and in respecting the rights acquired by the latter through treaties" to secure aid from imperialists.[1]

This is worth noting. The situation in which "both the reactionaries and the revolutionaries vied with each other . . . to secure aid from imperialists" had clearly prevailed in the 1911 Revolution and later in the struggle against Yuan Shikai (see Chapter IV, Section 1 and Chapter V, Section 1). The May Fourth Movement did indeed put an end to such a situation.

The reason why this change was possible was that, in the May Fourth Movement, there emerged in the Chinese revolution a fresh and vigorous political force which refused to reconcile itself with

[1] *Guide* (in Chinese), No. 113.

imperialist rule in China. Before this movement, the "revolutionaries," with elements of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie as their core, in spite of the fact that they did carry on a patriotic struggle to rid the country of imperialist oppression, harboured illusions about the imperialists and dared not take a firm stand against them. They, in fact, even sought "help" from the imperialists. At the time of the May Fourth Movement, the newly-born working class joined the revolution as an independent political force. Two years later, in 1921, the Communist Party of China — the party of the Chinese working class — was founded. The Chinese people saw clearly from the victory of the October Socialist Revolution that however powerful the imperialist camp might be, it was not impregnable. Inasmuch as the Chinese revolution was thenceforth led by the working class and became part of the world socialist revolution, the Chinese people's struggle against imperialism could not but assume a new aspect.

Chairman Mao has pointed out the importance of the May Fourth Movement:

> Its outstanding historical significance is to be seen in a feature which was absent in the Revolution of 1911, namely, its thorough and uncompromising opposition to imperialism as well as to feudalism.[1]

Beginning with the May Fourth Movement, the people's patriotic movements unfolded under the leadership of the proletariat and bore a thoroughly anti-imperialist character.

What was the May Fourth Movement? On May 4, 1919, some three thousand students in Beijing staged a demonstration, demanding that the government reject the Versailles Treaty clauses relating to Shandong, and punish the traitors. The demonstrators took justice into their own hands, burnt the residence of Cao Rulin, Minister of Communications, and beat up Zhang Zongxiang, the Chinese Minister to Japan. More than thirty students were arrested by the Beijing government. This movement immediately spread throughout the country and touched off a whole series of events.

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[1] Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Beijing, 1965, Vol. II, p. 375.

The political situation at that time was as follows: At home, many people had pinned their hopes on the peace negotiations between the North and the South. The negotiations, however, were nothing but a puppet show stage-managed by the imperialists — a meeting at which the spoils were divided among big and small warlords. Abroad, the discussions on China at the Paris Peace Conference, which had sown illusions in the hearts of so many people, also turned out to be a bargaining session at which the powers divided the spoils at China's expense. All this disillusioned and bewildered the Chinese people. Whom should they rely on? What should they do? The action of the students in Beijing provided a good answer. Yes, this was the way they should act. Neither the warlords nor the imperialists could be relied upon. The people must help themselves. And so they began to act.

After the May Fourth demonstration, the students in Beijing declared a general strike to carry forward their protest. On June 3, the students did propaganda work, in large numbers, in the streets of Beijing, and more than one thousand were thrown into prison. The strike drew immediate response from every corner of the country, not only from students but also from workers and merchants. A movement to boycott Japanese goods and to oppose the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference swept the country from Tianjin in the north to Guangzhou in the south, from Shanghai in the east to Chengdu in the west. Everywhere people plunged into this campaign with fresh vigour, well aware that they were giving battle to Japanese imperialism, the most rampant aggressor against China during the years immediately preceding, and to the government of traitorous warlords. Between sixty thousand and seventy thousand workers in Shanghai walked out and the railwaymen of the lines linking Beijing with Shanghai followed suit. Workers demonstrated at Tangshan on the Beijing-Shenyang Railway and at Changxindian on the Beijing-Hankou Railway. Merchants in Tianjin and Shanghai temporarily suspended business. Local student associations were set up one after another and the All-China Students' Association was formed to concert its action with the industrialists and businessmen to give further impetus to the patriotic movement that had now engulfed the whole

nation. It was a matter of great historic importance for the Chinese working class that its rank and file played their part in this patriotic movement. Although there were no modern and well-organized trade unions at that time, the workers rallied round their old-type organizations and joined enthusiastically in the struggle. This nation-wide patriotic movement, which manifested itself mainly in a boycott of Japanese goods, lasted for three years.

The imperialists and the traitorous government were greatly alarmed by the might and magnitude of this patriotic mass movement. The Beijing government charged that the student movement was "manipulated by rebellious professors and students" and saw the actions of the "student bandits" as "interference in politics." At the same time, it commended the publicly disgraced Cao Rulin, Zhang Zongxiang and Lu Zongyu as "loyal citizens" who had "rendered great service to the state." The Japanese Government urged the Beijing regime to sign the Versailles Treaty without ado and demanded that it suppress the boycott of Japanese goods as quickly as possible. The warlord and bureaucratic clique, of course, dared not disobey its masters. But it then had little experience in dealing with mass movements, and therefore found itself in a very embarrassing position. Finally on June 10, 1919, the Beijing government was compelled to ask Cao, Zhang and Lu, the "loyal citizens," to resign. President Xu Shichang himself also saw fit to tender his resignation on June 11. He said:

> It is absolutely necessary that we sign the Peace Treaty but public opinion in the country is against it. It is regrettable that the people do not understand diplomatic affairs. The Republic, however, cannot entirely ignore public opinion. It is this dilemma that forces me to resign....[1]

Although Xu's resignation was only a gesture, Premier Qian Nengxun was so genuinely frightened that he fled. This is sufficient to show how panic-stricken the Beijing government was in coming face to face with the sudden rise of the strength of the people. The Treaty of Versailles was due for signature on June 28. The Chinese

[1] Liu Yan, *History of Imperialist Oppression of China* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 195.

delegates to the Paris Peace Conference, most of whom were pro-British and pro-American and afraid of being branded as traitors, announced that they would not sign the treaty, regardless of what the Beijing government might decide. The people's patriotic movement had scored a victory, though a transient and superficial one.

The imperialists and the traitorous government, of course, could not allow the people to score a real victory. In July, the Beijing government, giving an account of its refusal to sign the Versailles Treaty, simultaneously issued a decree prohibiting the boycott of Japanese goods. This decree enraged the people. The boycott movement, in the form of a movement promoting the sales of native goods, continued to gain momentum. Impatient with the impotence of the Beijing government, Japanese imperialists resorted to armed force and, in November 1919, staged a blood-bath at Fuzhou. Acting on the orders of the Japanese Consulate in the city, officially-inspired Japanese hoodlums rioted and killed many patriotic students. The Japanese government also sent a warship to Fuzhou, and a landing party was put ashore. This further aroused the patriotic sentiments of the people throughout the country. Pretending to make representations to Japan, the Beijing government in reality accepted the Japanese demand to shelve the matter. The incident was settled only in November 1920, with a note to the Japanese envoy from Yan Huiqing (W. W. Yen), Foreign Minister of the Beijing government. The note said:

> The boycott of Japanese goods in Fuzhou since last May started as a result of a misunderstanding. Although the local officials did their best to suppress the ensuing riots, it was sometimes difficult to keep the situation under control, and because of this damage was caused to the interests of the merchants of your country. Striving to maintain friendly relations between your country and China, the Chinese government takes this opportunity to express deep regret over this matter.[1]

How could the awakened people tolerate such a servile tone?

On January 2, 1920, a little over a month after the Fuzhou Incident, the Beijing government again issued an order prohibiting the boycott of Japanese goods. Soon afterwards Japan approached

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 217.

the Foreign Ministry of the Beijing government with a proposal that the two governments start direct negotiations on the Shandong issue. Under the circumstances, the so-called direct negotiations really meant outright capitulation by China. Therefore another wave of mass protest spread throughout the country, and industrial, commercial and student organizations in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and elsewhere convoked a "national assembly" to launch a still more vigorous anti-Japanese campaign. On February 6, the Beijing government circulated the following directive to various provincial and regional authorities:

> There has been much irresponsible talk recently about the Shandong issue. In Beijing, mobs disrupt traffic and in Shanghai people threaten to stop paying taxes. These unlawful acts, if carried to the extreme, will disrupt public order and invite foreign aggression. They will place our country (the government of warlords and bureaucrats—*H.S.*) in a more difficult situation. . . . You must inform the public as well as private organizations that they should take the interests of the country into consideration, maintain calm and let the government handle the matter. If any decision is reached, it will be made known to the public. It is the responsibility of the military and civil authorities to maintain order and to prevent hoodlums from attempting to create disturbances by taking advantage of the situation. Offenders should be arrested and punished in accordance with the decrees repeatedly issued by the government. Negligence of duty will not be tolerated.[1]

The students' association in Beijing and the "national assembly" were dissolved by the military and police. On April 14, the All-China Students' Association in Shanghai declared a general strike. On May 6, the French Consul-General in Shanghai, acting on the request of the Beijing government, closed down the students' association and the All-Circles Federation in the French Concession. That imperialists and the warlord government had joined hands in suppressing the people's movements was made crystal clear once again. But the people's patriotic activities could not be curbed. The Beijing government dared neither to reject the Japanese proposal out of hand nor to conduct "direct negotiations" with Japan openly, so its pro-Japanese Premier Jin Yunpeng had to resign. On May 22, after lengthy deliberations, the Beijing government sent Japan a reply

[1] *The Biography of Liang Shiyi* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 74.

couched in very mild terms, saying that "it has not found it expedient to open negotiations with your government."

It may be seen that the persistent patriotic movements between 1919 and 1920 did achieve some success, although on a very limited scale. Imperialist Japan and its vassals still ruled over China, and the United States and Britain were still expanding their influence and tightening their political grip on the country. Yet in spite of all this, the people's struggle acquired a solid foundation in these two years, in readiness for bigger advances.

It is, of course, true that popular patriotic movements began to take shape at the end of the Qing Dynasty and that the use of economic boycotts as a weapon against the aggressors did not begin with the boycott of Japanese goods in 1919-1921. As early as 1905, there had been a movement to boycott American goods. The patriotic movement that commenced in 1919, however, was unprecedented not only in scope but also in character. It had results which it could never have had before, namely, as a result of this movement the working-class movement grew and Marxism-Leninism spread in China. After May Fourth, the masses of the workers rapidly became an independent force in the people's patriotic movement and proved themselves stalwart fighters in the patriotic struggles against imperialism. Many revolutionary intellectuals went to do mass work among the workers and trade unions gradually began to emerge in different places.

In 1920, the workers of the southern section of the Guangzhou-Hankou Railway and those of the Longhai Railway went on strike. The working-class movement in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hongkong, Hankou and other places and along the north-south major railway lines gradually gained momentum in 1921. Together with the growth of the working-class movement, socialist ideas began to take root in China. The May Fourth Movement was at the same time a movement for new culture in which, ideologically, Marxism-Leninism had begun to occupy a leading position. With progressive-minded intellectuals who were the first to accept Marxist-Leninist ideology taking the leading part, Chinese society witnessed a flourishing of socialist

ideas. These ideas helped the people understand the Chinese society and politics. Consequently, the imperialists, gentry, capitalists and compradors were no longer able to deceive the people with their lies as easily as before. In 1921, on the basis of the integration of the working-class movement with socialist ideology, the Communist Party of China was founded. After this, in their struggle against the powerful imperialists and their lackeys in China, the Chinese people had the leadership of a party that guided them in the correct direction and fought unflinchingly in the van of their struggles.

In this connection, we must once again refer to the great influence of the October Socialist Revolution. The emancipation of the Russian people stirred and stimulated the Chinese people to make exertions for their own emancipation. The fact that the Soviet government, born in the Revolution, proposed to abolish the unequal treaties with China further inspired the Chinese people who had long suffered from imperialist oppression and treachery. In July 1919, the Soviet government in a communication addressed to the Chinese people and the Chinese governments in the North and South proposed that diplomatic relations be established between the two countries and new treaties on equal terms be concluded. The Soviet government also declared its relinquishment of all privileges obtained through aggression by tsarist Russia, including extraterritoriality, as well as its share of the indemnities under the "Protocol of 1901". In April 1920, the Soviet government sent a formal note to the Beijing government to this effect. Ironically, although the tsarist government had been overthrown, its envoy remained in Beijing and continued to enjoy the special privileges sanctioned by unequal treaties, and the Beijing government kept on paying him regularly the indemnities under the "Protocol of 1901." The Beijing regime pigeonholed the note of the Soviet government, stating that it would take the same stand as the other powers in dealing with Russia. It went so far as to announce officially that it had rejected the Soviet government's note. The Soviet government, however, dispatched another note in September 1920, reiterating the proposals contained in the first note. It also sent a representative to Beijing. The Beijing government, having found out by then that many countries had al-

ready denied diplomatic status to tsarist envoys, informed the tsarist Minister in Beijing that he could no longer represent Russia, because, as the Beijing government feebly explained, "Russia has during the past few years been torn by civil strife and party conflicts, and for this reason no unified government based on the will of the people has yet been established."[1] This showed clearly that the Beijing government had no intention of recognizing the Soviet government. The imperialists too tried to interfere and even suggested that all the rights and interests of tsarist Russia in China should be taken over jointly by them. As a consequence, although the Beijing government outwardly had taken over the Russian concessions and assumed jurisdiction over Russian residents, it continued to employ tsarist diplomatic and police personnel, leaving them in the posts they had previously occupied.

The Chinese people at that time were deeply impressed by the just stand of the Soviet government. They were enraged by imperialist obstruction to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the Soviet Union and the servile attitude of the Beijing warlords towards the imperialists. Therefore in 1922, when the Soviet government again sent a delegate to China, the demand for establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the Soviet Union became one of the main slogans in the struggle waged by the masses in China. This was an expression of the further development of the anti-imperialist struggle of the Chinese people.

2. THE NEW FOUR-POWER CONSORTIUM AND THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

The patriotic movement of the Chinese people in 1919-1921 was directed against Japanese imperialism. It struck a severe blow at the Japanese imperialists and their lackeys in China, because, although the other imperialist powers also renewed their plots against

[1] Zhang Zhongfu, *A History of China's Foreign Relations* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 287.

China after World War I, their aggressive schemes were still in the stage of preparation and had not yet come out into the open.

Towards the end of World War I, the United States, making use of its vast financial power, was looking for a chance to expand into China and to challenge Japan's position there. As described in the preceding chapter, one of its first steps was to propose the formation of a new Four-Power Consortium. The United States approached the governments of Britain, France and Japan on this matter in July 1918. The substance of the American proposal was that the Consortium should monopolize all loans made to China for either political or economic purposes, and that the participating powers should relinquish to the Consortium all their preferences and options for existing and future loans. Japan was naturally not prepared to agree to such a proposal in its entirety, because it would mean handing over to other powers its exclusive rights in the north-eastern provinces and Mongolia. Thus, while officially announcing its readiness to participate, Japan made use of "public opinion" at home to oppose the scheme.

A preparatory conference of the Four-Power Consortium was held in Paris in the spring of 1919, simultaneously with the Paris Peace Conference. The powers reached a preliminary agreement, but Japan, thwarted in its attempt to exclude the Northeast and Mongolia from the terms of reference of the Consortium, continued to voice opposition. In order to settle this issue, the governments of the United States, Britain and Japan held formal talks. Notes and memoranda were exchanged, but they did no more than add to the heap of archives. The points of dispute were as follows: Japan insisted that it had vested interests in the Northeast and Mongolia which had been recognized by the American government in the Lansing-Ishii Agreement, and that its aim in sticking to its special position in these two areas was not to crowd out the other powers, but only to ward off "Red penetration." The United States and Britain, adhering to their favourite formulas of "open door" and "equal opportunity," reiterated their opposition to the swallowing-up of the Northeast and Mongolia by Japan alone, but indicated that the question could be amicably settled in a give-and-take spirit. The two Western

powers then suggested that those railways in the Northeast and Mongolia (either completed or under construction) which were to be outside the competence of the Consortium be concretely defined. Some headway was made in these consultations, and with the arrival in Japan of Thomas A. Lamont, representative of the American banking group, an agreement was eventually reached on May 11, 1920. The new Four-Power Consortium (as distinct from the defunct Four-Power Consortium which had operated during the last years of Qing rule) came formally into existence in New York on October 15, 1920.

Japan was satisfied. As Japanese Foreign Minister Kosai Uchida declared in a statement to the Tokyo Diet, "the governments of Britain, America and France, respecting the interests of Japan's national security and economy, have recognized its special position."[1] The United States was no less satisfied, since it had obtained the leading position in the new Consortium. At that time the imperialist powers, European and American, considered it to their advantage to use Japan as an instrument to hold revolutionary Russia in check. They were, therefore, not inclined to do away with all the privileges which Japan enjoyed in the border areas of north China, but were satisfied to circumscribe those privileges somewhat.

What purpose did the United States have in mind in setting up the new Consortium? A clear idea is given by the memorandum which Paul S. Reinsch, American Minister to China, addressed to the Beijing government in June 1919.

Reinsch's memorandum stated that the establishment of the new Consortium did not represent meddling by foreigners in China's political affairs, or an attempt to impose foreign control over China. The administrative power of the Beijing government, he added, would remain intact in Chinese hands. The United States, he continued, fully understood that, in normal circumstances, the Chinese were capable of managing their own finances, railways and other

[1] Liu Yan, *History of Imperialist Oppression of China* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 280.

enterprises. But the prevailing circumstances were inauspicious for this. Therefore the United States had decided to sponsor the formation of the Consortium in order to serve the interests of foreign banking groups as well as of the government and people of China. (This meant that the Americans thought the Chinese people still incompetent to administer their finances, railways and other enterprises — *H.S.*)

Hence, the U.S. Minister went on, the Beijing government was expected to inform its creditors of the aims and reasons for all the loans it sought, whether they be for administrative or industrial purposes. This was not interference, the memorandum stressed. It had been decided upon because it would be good for China not to conceal anything from its creditors, and to discuss the ways and means of establishing and improving its credit.

The new Consortium, Reinsch said, would consider the consolidation of the Beijing government as its main task. This was because the powers realized that a stable and prosperous government in China would contribute more to their benefit than the continuation of the struggle for spheres of influence. Appropriate measures would therefore be taken by the Consortium, after its inauguration, to protect the Beijing government, to enable it to implement plans of administrative and economic development, and to avert the danger of the partition of the country.

The Consortium, Reinsch emphasized, would follow the principle of safeguarding the interests of China's creditors, without attempting to control the administration of the Beijing government or insisting on the precedence of foreign officials over Chinese officials in the Beijing government. As sound politics constituted the best security for the loans incurred by the Beijing government, the American Minister, finally showing his hand, concluded that the Consortium would require China's agreement to the following conditions:

1. China's revenues and expenditures must be made public, so as to win general confidence.

2. Only capable persons should be appointed to responsible government posts and their appointments should be permanent.

It was further made plain that the Consortium would insist on its representatives being given authority to audit the accounts of the Chinese treasury to make sure that they corresponded with the state budget. In the event that any branch or any employee of the government should be guilty of violating the provisions of the budget or indulged in corrupt activities, the Beijing government was to deal immediately with such cases, said Reinsch.[1]

This memorandum reminds us of the joke about "putting up a sign above one's money hideaway saying that one's 300 taels of silver are not inside." On the surface, the document repeatedly affirmed that the Consortium would not interfere in Chinese politics or attempt to exercise control over China's civil administration. But these eloquent affirmations only serve to mask the real plot. In spite of the assertion that the administrative power of the Beijing government would remain intact in Chinese hands, the aim pursued was nothing less than foreign supervision and control over the Beijing government. Since every item of China's revenues and expenditures was to be reported to and scrutinized by the Consortium, which would also be given a say in the appointment and dismissal of government officials, the Beijing government would be reduced to a mere agent of the Consortium. No wonder the Consortium was so willing to "consolidate" and "protect" it in every way. The Second Congress of the Communist Party of China was therefore right in pointing out, in its Manifesto issued in May 1922, that "The United States . . . in its attempt to organize a new consortium (that is, an imperialist international trust) sought to use its overwhelming economic pressure to export capital to China for the purpose of establishing a dominant position to plunder China. They wish to become the overlord of China's economy."

In spite of their preliminary agreement on the Consortium, the clash of interests between the United States and Japan remained unsolved. This, coupled with similar contradictions existing between the United States on the one hand and Britain and France on the other, made it impossible for the Consortium to go into action

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[1] *The Biography of Liang Shiyi* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, pp. 44-48.

immediately after its inauguration. Thus the plot of the big American capitalists could not be put into operation right away. An American, Frederick W. Stevens who came to China early in 1921 as representative of the American group of the Consortium, was quoted by Liang Shiyi as saying:

> Should the United States act independently in granting loans to China, it will incur not only the opposition of Japan, but also the jealousy of Britain; and since France is bound to follow at the heels of Britain and Japan, the United States will be isolated and eventually will have to give in to them. It is a far better idea to enlist the participation of Britain, Japan and France in a new consortium and to extend loans to China jointly. . . . I am fully aware of the fact that the powers are uneasy bedfellows in China, and consequently throughout my stay in China as a representative from the United States, I shall exercise the utmost vigilance so as not to fail in my duties.[1]

Since the powers were "uneasy bedfellows," it is not surprising that keen rivalry between them went on unabated. A particularly bitter struggle for supremacy in China developed in the following years between the United States and Japan.

In 1919, when preparations were under way for the formation of the Consortium, John Earl Baker (an American adviser on accounting to the Railway Department of the Ministry of Communications of the Beijing government) put forward a plan for joint management of Chinese railways by the United States, Japan, Britain, France and China. He proposed that all railways in China, whether completed or under construction, whether owned by the Chinese or under the control of a foreign power, should be placed under the joint management of these five powers. But this plan, although warmly supported by Britain, fell through as a result of strong opposition by Japan.

In January 1921, after the establishment of the Consortium, the Federal Telegraph Co. of America concluded an agreement with the Beijing government on a loan for the installation of wireless stations. The American company was given the right to build

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[1] A talk between Stevens and Liang Shiyi, prominent financial magnate associated with the Jiaotong clique. See *The Biography of Liang Shiyi* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 142.

wireless stations in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Hankou and Harbin, and to operate them for ten years. Both Britain and Japan protested. The protest from the latter was particularly strong, as Japan had earlier concluded a similar agreement with the Beijing government. Although the United States government backed the Federal Telegraph Co., it failed to gain its point and had to shelve the matter.

In these circumstances, the United States fell back on two other tactics to get the upper hand in its struggle with Japan: It sought to undermine Japan's relations with other powers, and it struck at Japan's position with regard to China's internal affairs.

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was due to expire in 1921. Japan desired its renewal, but Britain was of two minds. Seizing this opportunity, the United States started working for the abrogation of the alliance, with the aim of getting Britain and other European powers to join in exerting pressure on Japan and imposing certain restrictions on Japanese influence in the Far East. In July 1921, with the prior agreement of Britain, the United States proposed a conference on limitation of armaments at which it was also proposed to discuss Pacific and Far Eastern affairs. This conference came to be known as the Washington Conference.

So far as China's internal situation was concerned, conditions were extremely favourable to Japan. A pro-Japanese clique, headed by Duan Qirui and fostered by Japan during World War I, was in control of the Beijing government. The Beijing government first followed Japan in opposing the establishment of the Consortium, then became silent the moment a compromise was reached between Japan and the United States. But the United States and Britain also aimed at extending their influence in China, and it was only natural that they spared no effort to attain their goal. They chose to back the warlords of the Zhili clique headed by Cao Kun and Wu Peifu who were waging a struggle against the warlords of Duan Qirui's clique.

In July 1920, a war broke out between the warlords of these two cliques. The Anhui clique was defeated. Duan Qirui and his clique fell from power. By the time the new Consortium was estab-

lished, the Zhili clique had got an upper hand in China's politics. This was an important success for the scheme of American and British imperialists to extend their influence in China. Yet it did not mean the utter defeat of Japan, because after the May Fourth Movement when the cunning Japanese imperialists realized that the notorious Anhui clique would sooner or later collapse they too had begun looking for a new tool. This tool was soon found in Zhang Zuolin, a warlord of the Fengtian clique.

During the war between the Zhili and Anhui cliques, Zhang Zuolin had allied himself with the Zhili clique and helped overthrow the Duan Qirui regime. After the war, the Beijing government came under the joint control of the Zhili and Fengtian cliques. Thus, under the aegis of the Fengtian armed forces, pro-Japanese elements remained active in the Beijing government. But on the eve of the Washington Conference, when Wu Peifu, supported by the United States and Britain, had already established control of the Changjiang Valley, the latent struggle between the Fengtian and Zhili cliques was increasingly coming into the open.

The principal participants at the Washington Conference were the United States, Britain, Japan, France and Italy, who had emerged from World War I as the "Big Five." Their discussions on Pacific and Far Eastern affairs were in fact discussions on problems relevant to China, and it was decided to invite China to take part. The governments of Holland, Portugal and Belgium were also invited because of their imperialist interests in China. The conference sat from November 12, 1921 to February 6, 1922.

We already have some idea of the main strands in the relations between Britain, Japan and the United States and of the bickering and alignment of forces among the different warlord cliques before the conference, which reflected the way they served the interests of their different foreign masters. It will also be noted that the conference was convoked at a time when the political consciousness and struggle of the Chinese people were reaching new heights as a result of the May Fourth Movement. If we bear all these points in

mind, it will not be so difficult for us to comprehend the results of the conference.

The United States and Britain wanted merely to restrain Japan — reasonably. They had neither the intention nor the power to liquidate Japan's status as a big power in the Far East. Consequently, when the conference discussed limitation of armaments, it decided on a 5:5:3 ratio for the tonnage of the navies of the United States, Britain and Japan, respectively. In the opinion of the Americans and British a navy of such power would make Japan strong enough to suppress any anti-imperialist forces of the peoples in the East, yet not strong enough to threaten their own interests. But Japan saw through these intentions and assumed an irreconcilable attitude, creating quite a lot of difficulties for the United States and Britain during the conference. It even proclaimed, prior to the opening of the talks, that it would refuse to discuss "problems between specific countries, or accomplished facts." This made it impossible for the conference to take up Sino-Japanese issues, and the United States and Britain did not insist on it. The conference limited its treatment of problems relating to China to a mere discussion of so-called "general principles." Even the Shandong problem which was of a most pressing nature and demanded an immediate settlement was not put on the agenda, but was left to "direct negotiations" between the Chinese and Japanese delegations. These were conducted outside the conference with the British and American representatives acting as "mediators."

It was the hope of the American imperialists that the conference would afford them a good opportunity of making some political capital by creating a "favourable" impression on the Chinese people. At the very beginning of the conference, they backed the Beijing government's delegation's demand for discussion of questions of tariff autonomy, renunciation of extraterritoriality, withdrawal of foreign troops, and abolition of the spheres of influence of the foreign powers. For a while this gesture did succeed in creating an atmosphere of illusory optimism in China, leading certain sections of the Chinese people to believe that this time the United States was really in earnest about helping their country. But what, in reality, were the results of

the Washington Conference in relation to these questions? Just resolutions on vague principles. It was decided that on concrete measures would be taken on such matters until they had been "investigated and examined" by special committees to be formed by the powers. This was a trap which could fool no one.

The notorious decisions of the Washington Conference relating to China were embodied in the so-called Nine-Power Treaty. The United States displayed the greatest enthusiasm for this treaty because the central idea pervading it was the "open door and equal opportunity" doctrine. In this volume we have more than once examined the true meaning of the "open door" — which was a euphemism for the joint control of China by the powers, and more specifically, a smokescreen for domination of China by the United States through the use of its vast financial power. All this found vivid expression in the articles of the Nine-Power Treaty.

The delegates of the Beijing government had the effrontery to be the first to introduce the open door principle at the Washington Conference. The second point of their "ten-point programme" presented at the first plenary session, read as follows:

> China, being in full accord with the principle of the so-called open door or equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations having treaty relations with China, is prepared to accept and apply it in all parts of the Chinese Republic without exception.[1]

Following this, American delegate Elihu Root proposed the discussion of "four general principles," which were finally adopted by the plenary session. Under these principles, the powers were to undertake:

1. To respect the sovereignty, the independence, and the territorial and administrative integrity of China;
2. To provide the fullest and most unembarrassed opportunity to China to develop and maintain for herself an effective and stable government;
3. To use their influence for the purpose of effectually establishing and maintaining the principle of equal opportunity

[1] Liu Yan, *History of Imperialist Oppression of China* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 308.

for the commerce and industry of all nations throughout the territory of China;

4. To refrain from taking advantage of conditions in China in order to seek special rights or privileges which would abridge the rights of subjects or citizens of friendly States, and from countenancing action inimical to the security of such States.[1]

It will be seen from this that the Beijing government asked, and the United States actively advocated, the placing of China under the joint control of foreign powers. After Root had proposed his four "principles," another American delegate Charles Evans Hughes advanced a proposal on the "open door policy," which contained, in addition to a definition of what was meant by "open door and equal opportunity," the following clause:

> The Chinese Government . . . declares its intention of being guided by the same principles in dealing with applications for economic rights and privileges from Governments and nationals of all foreign countries whether parties to that agreement or not.[2]

In the end, the Nine-Power Treaty was formulated on the basis of both Root's "four general principles" and Hughes' proposal on the "open door policy." Prior to the Washington Conference, the "open door" doctrine had been used by the imperialist powers, and the United States in particular, to dress up their aggressive acts in China. Now at the request of the Chinese warlord regime, quisling servitors of imperialist powers, it became a covenant to be jointly observed by the foreign powers.

The United States was extremely satisfied with the results of the conference. It did not hesitate to accommodate Japan on many other practical issues, merely in order to obtain the latter's signature to the Nine-Power Treaty. As for Japan, the signing of a paper enunciating such general principles meant nothing to it, so far as it got what it was after in practical matters. The United States was calculating how to make full use of the principles laid down in the

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[1] Bau, *The Open Door Doctrine in Relation to China,* pp. 221-222.

[2] MacNair, *op. cit.,* p. 863.

Nine-Power Treaty to "legalize" its expansion in China. But Japan saw nothing in the treaty that would in effect hamper its own activitives. Ten years later, when Japan launched its invasion of China on September 18, 1931, it scornfully tore the treaty to pieces.

The whole course of the Washington Conference shows how arrogantly Japan insisted on its claim of "vested interests" in China, how assiduously the United States appeased Japan so that it would not encroach upon American interests, and how Britain and other countries, while they avoided stepping on Japan's toes, followed the American line. China, at the Washington Conference, had the wretched experience of being kicked around. Yet the traitorous Beijing government, which so gladly played the part of a lackey of imperialism, was actually proud of being treated as an "equal" with the other powers at Washington.

It is clear that the Washington Conference did not succeed in really mitigating the conflict between the United States and Japan. Not long after its conclusion hostilities broke out on a still larger scale between the warlord cliques that were backed by different imperialist countries. Still less did it succeed in deceiving the Chinese people. Both while the conference was in session and afterwards, the Chinese people's struggle against imperialism and domestic warlords continued to advance forward.

3. BATTLE STANDARD AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Three months after the end of the Washington Conference, which aimed at carving up China, the Communist Party of China, the nascent party of the Chinese working class, held its Second Congress and issued a Manifesto which raised aloft the battle flag of struggle against imperialism.

The Communist Party of China, at that time, was less than a year old. Numerically, it was small. But having learned to wield the weapon of Marxism-Leninism, and assisted by the Communist International led by Lenin, it was able to give correct answers to the questions posed by the Chinese revolution. The Manifesto of the

Second Congress of the Party, though not without flaws, was nevertheless a document which for the first time presented the Chinese people with a clear analysis of the situation facing the country and a clarion call for action.

The Manifesto, in its first part, pointed out that China was under "the domination of international imperialism." It explained that capitalist imperialism depended on ruthless exploitation of the colonies for its very existence, and that the scramble for colonies by the imperialist powers had led to the outbreak of World War I. Stressing that China, like other nations of the East, had for many years been "trampled underfoot by Britain, the United States, France and Japan," the Manifesto continued:

> The process of imperialist aggression against China in the past has fully revealed the true nature of world capitalist imperialism. The mouths of the capitalist powers water as they look at the vast fertile lands of China, its unlimited riches and teeming millions of cheap labour. They fight with one another for the most advantageous privileges, and this accounts for China's present special status in the field of international relations.

The Manifesto stated that, in the eighty years since the Opium War, imperialist aggression against China had virtually reduced it to a colony. It described in detail how Japan, the United States and Britain fought for privileges in China after World War I, and arrived at the following conclusion:

> The Washington Conference has created a new situation in China. Rival aggression by the imperialist powers, which went on for many years past, has not turned into concerted aggression. Such concerted aggression is bound to deprive the Chinese people completely of their economic independence and reduce the four hundred million oppressed people of China to slaves of the international trusts, these masters of a new type. The time has come when we cannot but rise to give battle, for the Chinese people face a life-and-death struggle.

After exposing the subjugation of China by capitalist imperialism, the Manifesto went on to point out that, following World War I, the capitalist world was steadily approaching its doom and that the oppressed people could free themselves from the imperialist yoke. It declared:

There are two trends in the present-day world politics which run directly counter to each other: (1) the capitalist-imperialist powers of the world which are jointly attempting to subjugate the proletariat and the oppressed peoples throughout the world; (2) the revolutionary movement which aims at the overthrow of international capitalist imperialism, that is, the world revolutionary movement and the oppressed peoples' national revolutionary movement, both led by the Communist International and Soviet Russia — the vanguard of the world proletariat.

The revolutionary forces of these two movements against capitalist imperialism — the proletarian revolution and the national revolution — become more closely united with each passing day. These united revolutionary forces are bound to throw the decaying corpse of world capitalism into the grave that it has dug for itself. In the past few decades, the forces of the Chinese people that arose to resist imperialist oppression have grown considerably — and will continue to grow in even greater measure. But the anti-imperialist movement of the Chinese people must join forces with the national revolutions of all the oppressed peoples of the world and unite with the world proletarian revolutionary movement in order to overthrow quickly the common oppressor — international capitalist imperialism. This is the only path for the toiling masses in China to take if they are to liberate themselves from imperialist oppression.

The second part of the Manifesto, which dealt with the existing political and economic conditions and the oppression of the toiling masses in China, correctly pointed out that the feudal regime of warlords and bureaucrats in China was in league with the imperialist forces. Though the Manifesto did not sufficiently elaborate the question of the leadership of the proletariat in a democratic revolution, it nevertheless stressed its important role in the struggle against imperialism:

> The labour movement in China advanced from the moment it came into existence. The mighty strength of the workers was amply proved by the strike called by the seamen and other workers in Hongkong for better economic terms. Workers' organizations have been growing with great speed. As the workers are groaning under the savage oppression of both the Chinese and foreign capitalists, it is inevitable that the revolutionary movement will advance unremittingly, so as to eventually create a revolutionary force to lead the assault to smash the hold of world capitalist imperialism on China.

This was, in the main, a correct analysis of the conditions in China. Thus, the third part of the Manifesto which set forth a programme for the Party's struggle at that period contained the following two essential points: (1) elimination of internal discord,

overthrow of the warlords, and establishment of peace in the country; (2) liquidation of international imperialist oppression and achievement of complete national independence for the Chinese people.

The Manifesto contained such stirring slogans as "Down with the warlords!" and "Down with international imperialism!" From then on these slogans rang constantly in the ears of the Chinese people, inspiring them in their march forward to complete liberation.

Dealing with the special characteristics of the revolution in China, Stalin pointed out with particular emphasis: . . . the Chinese revolution is a bourgeois democratic revolution, it is at the same time a revolution of national liberation spearheaded against the domination of foreign imperialism in China. . . . it follows from this that the questions of the fight against foreign imperialism and its Chinese agents cannot but play an important role in the Chinese revolution.[1]

The Communist Party of China, even in its infancy, was able to grasp these special characteristics of the Chinese revolution in analysing the situation in China, and in the political slogans it put before the people. It was also able to become the vanguard of the people in the struggle against imperialism and to act in a most resolute way. Hence the Party quickly became the saviour of the deeply oppressed Chinese people and the leader of the revolutionary working class and the broad masses.

When such anti-imperialist slogans were first raised, however, they were ridiculed and opposed by quite a number of "gentlemen." For instance, in his article "China in the Family of Nations" published in October 1922, Hu Shi stated that the declaration of the Manifesto that foreign imperialist powers were backing the different warlord cliques in China was like "the talk of wonders in foreign lands by countryfolk — almost completely without factual basis." According to him, foreign countries harboured no "evil intentions"

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[1] J. Stalin, "The Prospect of the Revolution in China," *Works*, Eng. ed., FLPH, Moscow, 1954, Vol. VIII, p. 374.

towards China. Hence, he said, "to speak the truth, there is now not much danger of foreign aggression in China." Here, from another section of the article, as a further example of Hu Shi's chaterings:

> The *Guide*, a weekly journal published in Shanghai, has put forward two big objectives: democratic revolution and struggle against the aggression of international imperialism. We are naturally in favour of the first objective. But we consider that the second objective should be included in the first, because we are of the opinion that a successful completion of the democratic revolution and restoration of sound politics will automatically do away with a great part of international imperialist aggression. . . . We sincerely advise our friends to direct their efforts to the one simple objective of achieving democracy, and not to drag in for the present the question of international imperialism. Political reform is the prerequisite of a successful struggle against imperialist aggression.[1]

Such were the views of the comprador-scholar Hu Shi. They reflected the fatal weakness of the democratic revolution as led by the bourgeoisie from the fall of the Qing rule onward. The proletarian revolutionaries of the time already criticized this weakness in no uncertain terms. Cai Hesen, one of China's leading Communists, in an article criticizing the mistakes made by bourgeois revolutionaries, published in May 1923, thoroughly demolished the nonsense peddled by Hu Shi. Cai Hesen wrote:

> The revolutionary (bourgeois revolutionary — *H.S.*) leaders in China always display a number of erroneous concepts. Firstly, they fail to understand that the revolutionary movement in China is a revolutionary movement in a colonial country. They always take the revolution in China to be a movement to settle "internal affairs," and they believe that there is no need to talk about repulsing foreign imperialism since the powers, according to their argument, will automatically change their attitude as soon as our internal affairs are put in good order. Secondly, they mistakenly believe that the revolution is a matter which concerns only China, that it has no bearing on the international situation. They believe that the Chinese revolution can succeed if it adopts a policy that forestalls foreign intervention and that a simple declaration to the effect that "all treaty stipulations will be honoured" (or not violated) will be enough to prevent foreign countries from doing harm to the revolution. Thirdly, they keep on dreaming of obtaining help from "friendly powers," in other words, from this or that group of foreign imperialists. Such a

[1] *A Collection of Writings of Hu Shi* (in Chinese), 2nd series, Vol. 3, p. 128.

concept is ingrained in their minds although facts have proved, time and again, that nothing good can come of it.[1]

Once these mistakes were understood and corrected, nothing could prevent the Chinese people from bringing their revolutionary movement on to the road to a bright future. The situation was perfectly clear. The question of democracy in China could not be separated from the question of national independence. The enemy of the Chinese people's movement for democracy and independence was none other than the forces represented by the warlord regimes, or in other words the forces of imperialism which backed these warlords. Thus, the task of fighting feudalism was necessarily linked with that of fighting imperialism. Only Hu Shi and those like him could talk such utter rot as "not to drag in for the present the question of international imperialism." As to the broad masses of the people, they were already marching with stout hearts towards the objective clearly held out to them.

4. WU PEIFU, THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN

After the Washington Conference the relations between the imperialist powers appeared quite harmonious on the surface. Actually they were very tense. The fight for special privileges in China continued to rage, and led to the imminent danger of war between the Zhili and Fengtian warlord cliques. In April 1922, hostilities broke out between them.

Chairman Mao has written:

> The contradictions and struggles among the cliques of warlords in China reflect the contradictions and struggles among the imperialist powers. Hence, as long as China is divided among the imperialist powers, the various cliques of warlords cannot under any circumstances come to terms, and whatever compromises they may reach will only be

[1] Cai Hesen, "The Chinese Revolution in International Relations," see *Guide*, No. 23.

temporary. A temporary compromise today engenders a bigger war tomorrow.[1]

Only if we are equipped with such a viewpoint can we understand clearly why, in that period, military clashes among the warlords, big or small, were frequent and inevitable.

Since the imperialists could still maintain harmonious relations on the surface, they did not directly attack each other with arms. But because their frantic bid for supremacy in China continued unabated, each of them tried to make use of one or more warlords, instigating them to fight others. Both Duan Qirui's Anhui clique and Zhang Zuolin's Fengtian clique were tools of imperialist Japan, and were regarded as such by the people. The Zhili clique of Cao Kun and Wu Peifu, which climbed to power on the wave of outcries against the treason committed by the pro-Japanese cliques, was proved by events to be the tool of American and British imperialists. Since the Paris Peace Conference and the Washington Conference had exposed the aggressive designs of the United States and Britain against China, their mouthings of "righteousness" and "justice" were nothing but empty words. After it assumed control of the government, the record of the Zhili clique was also one of selling out China, waging civil wars and oppressing the people. This made it still clearer that the agents of American and British imperialists were as traitorous as those of Japanese imperialists.

Here we must pause to relate briefly the origin of the Zhili clique of warlords. Just as Yuan Shikai in his day inherited power from Li Hongzhang and was followed by Duan Qirui, so Cao Kun and Wu Peifu got their power in the Zhili clique by "inheritance." The two influential generals under Yuan Shikai had been Duan Qirui and Feng Guozhang. After Yuan's death, Duan held the reins of government in Beijing, while Feng concentrated his strength in the Changjiang Valley. Then, in 1917, Feng became president in Beijing, but was ousted by Duan in the following year. It was their struggle for power which led to the antagonism between the Zhili

[1] Mao Zedong, "Why Is It That Red Political Power Can Exist in China," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., FLP, Beijing, 1965, Vol. I, p. 63.

and Anhui cliques. Duan was a tool of Japan in the North. Feng, whose influences spread along the Changjiang Valley, had close connections with Britain. After Feng's death at the end of 1919, the leadership of the Zhili clique fell to Cao Kun and Wu Peifu. Cao too had been a subordinate of Yuan Shikai in the last days of the Qing Dynasty. Wu, who was an able officer, owed his rise to Cao's patronage. All these warlords, both of the Anhui and Zhili groups, boasted of belonging to "one family" — the "orthodox Beiyang group," and looked upon the country as their own property. Since this Beiyang group which traced its "family tree" back to the days of Yuan Shikai represented the most powerful military forces of the time in China, far more powerful than those of the samll provincial warlords, the imperialists were only too glad to pick "their men" from among its members.

Wu Peifu, although he was a subordinate of Cao Kun and had only been a divisional commander in 1919, was the moving spirit of the Zhili clique. Skilled in making use of every opportunity to cheat the people, and in collaborating with the imperialists without showing it too clearly, he was considered more clever than other senior Beiyang warlords. During the May Fourth Movement, when he saw that the Duan clique had become the target of popular wrath and that the British and American imperialists were itching to take advantage of the situation, Wu exerted himself as never before. He sent out one circular telegram after another opposing the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty, agitating for the cancellation of the Sino-Japanese secret pacts, and demanding the holding of armistice talks between the North and the South. He even asked for a national assembly to discuss and settle affairs of the state. The term "patriotism" seldom left his lips and he spared no efforts to convince the people that he too was a "revolutionary." His lofty words led many people to believe that this soldier was quite different from all other warlords.

During the Zhili-Anhui war of 1920, the forces of the Zhili clique, with Wu's army as the nucleus, succeeded in overthrowing Duan Qirui's pro-Japanese regime. Japan's rivals were greatly pleased with this triumph and thought that they had discovered a

real and ideal "hero" for their purposes. American and British newspapers praised Wu, bestowing upon him such titles as "the strong man," and "the great hero of new China." The Anglo-American imperialists had long sought just such a man to rule China, a man who could command the support of the people and at the same time be bent easily to their use. Yuan Shikai and Duan Qirui had failed. Now they decided that Wu Peifu was "the man for their money." Thus, Sun Yat-sen said of him:

> After he (Wu) had overthrown Duan Qirui, he began talking like a revolutionist. He always talked about the corruption of the government and a national assembly to solve affairs of the state. But at heart he always aspired to be a second Yuan Shikai. Knowing him for what he was, the foreigners decided he could be made use of. They considered him their best asset and helped him in every way so as to take the fullest advantage.[1]

The foreigners in this case were the American and British imperialists.

After the Zhili-Anhui war of 1920, the Zhili clique was still unable to rule independently in Beijing. It had to share power with the Fengtian warlords headed by Zhang Zuolin. Lu Yongxiang, a warlord of Duan Qirui's clique, still held sway in Zhejiang Province and many small warlords dominated other provinces. So, after the Zhili-Anhui war, Wu Peifu, with his headquarters at Luoyang, began to pursue a policy of "unification of the country by armed force." In 1921 his army occupied the provinces of Shaanxi and Hubei, and pressed on from Yichang towards Sichuan, scoring victories wherever it went. These successes gained Wu further esteem in the eyes of his American and British masters.

The Fengtian and Zhili cliques were partners in the Beijing government. But dissensions over the spoils led to quarrels and, as the behind-the-scenes conflict of interests of their respective masters grew more acute, they eventually came to blows. This was the reason that the Fengtian-Zhili war broke out in April 1922, soon after the close of the Washington Conference. The result was that the Fengtian clique was defeated and retreated north of the Great Wall

[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 65.

where it proclaimed the "autonomy of the Northeast." The Beijing government became the spoils of war of the Zhili clique.

With control in their hands, the Zhili warlords did more window-dressing to win popular goodwill, and also to repay the confidence reposed in them by their imperialist masters. They ousted Xu Shichang who had been elected president by the Anfu parliament, reconvoked the parliament of 1912 and installed Li Yuanhong as president. These steps, in their opinion, restored the "legitimate government" of the "Republic" and put politics back on the right track.

In the South, the Zhili clique had earlier linked up with a Guangdong warlord, Chen Jiongming, who was prevailed upon to revolt against Sun Yat-sen's government in Guangzhou. Sun was forced to leave for Shanghai, where the Zhili warlords, once they had got the upper hand in the Beijing government, sent representatives to negotiate with him. This was because they wanted to take advantage of Sun's reputation to enhance the prestige of the "unified government." They therefore expressed hopes of "co-operation between Sun Yat-sen and Wu Peifu." At this juncture a group of "celebrated scholars" headed by Hu Shi in Beijing came out for a "gentlemen's government," saying: "We all . . . should now calmly acknowledge that a 'good government' is our minimum demand in respect of China's political reform."[1] This proposal was seized by the Zhili warlords as a useful window-dressing. One of the advocates of the "gentlemen's government," Wang Chonghui, who was then a professor at Beijing University and who had been several times a cabinet member of Yuan Shikai's regime and of regimes controlled by the Fengtian warlords, was asked to form a cabinet. Two other advocates, Luo Wengan and Tang Erhe, were also brought in. It looked as if a "gentlemen's government" had actually been formed under the aegis of the warlords. In the words of the U.S. and British newspapers, this meant that "liberals" had been invited to join the government.

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[1] *A Collection of Writings of Hu Shi* (in Chinese), 2nd series, Vol. 3, p. 27.

The whole thing was but a smokescreen. In fact, the people were disgusted both with "the parliament of 1912" and the "legitimate" President Li Yuanhong. The "gentlemen's government" was merely a group of bureaucrats bossed by the warlords. The talk about "peaceful unification" was just an empty phrase. With the government in their grip, the Zhili warlords continued to raise foreign loans, strengthen their army, wage civil wars and oppress the people. They were no different from Yuan Shikai and Duan Qirui.

Wu Peifu, without too much fuss, made Luoyang his headquarters and, with the support of the United States, started to expand his army for battle. He completely exposed his brutality on February 7, 1923, when he ordered his troops to massacre the striking workers of the Beijing-Hankou Railway. In March, he called a council of war at Luoyang, and it was here that the slogan of "unification by armed force" was raised. The flames of civil war fomented and directed by the Luoyang headquarters raged in the provinces of Sichuan, Hunan, Fujian and Guangdong.

Wu's military successes encouraged Cao Kun, the leader of the Zhili clique, in his aspiration to the presidency. In June, Li Yuanhong was thrown out. In October, after he had bribed members of parliament, Cao Kun was "elected" president, and the people realized that the Zhili clique was just as sordid as Duan Qirui's. Some time later Sun Yat-sen said:

> Wu Peifu thought that, with foreign help, there was nothing on earth he could not achieve. He became more and more audacious, and, using his armed forces, he raged through the country, making it impossible for the Chinese people to lead a peaceful and happy life.[1]

In the struggle for supremacy in China, Britain sided with the United States while France supported Japan. Japan's influence suffered a double reverse during the Zhili-Anhui and the Fengtian-Zhili wars. In order to turn the tables on the Zhili warlords who were entrenched in the Beijing government, it gave unremitting support to the Fengtian warlord Zhang Zuolin and the Zhejiang warlord Lu Yongxiang. The United States, on the other hand, spared no efforts

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[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 65.

to strengthen the Zhili clique so as to prevent the Fengtian and Zhejiang forces from staging a comeback. It considered that if the Zhili clique, with its support, should succeed in "unifying" China, it would have little difficulty in realizing all the plans it had in mind since the inauguration of the new Consortium.

To help Wu Peifu implement his policy of "unification by armed force," the United States lavished both munitions and money on him. A single delivery of arms and munitions in 1923, for instance, was valued at three million U.S. dollars. Through the American Minister in China, Wu Peifu signed a contract with an American firm for the purchase of ten thousand rifles, 20 million rounds of ammunition and 250 machine guns. He had a squadron of aeroplanes and an aeroplane repair shop at Luoyang, with an American to train both airmen and mechanics and make designs. Wu also obtained a loan of £1,500,000 from a British firm, the Pekin Syndicate Limited for building a railway between Daoqing and Jinan. Qi Xieyuan, Military Governor of Jiangsu Province, who belonged to the Zhili clique, was granted a loan by the United States, ostensibly for harnessing the Huaihe River.

Cao Kun, in his long-standing preparations to assume the presidency, had worries which were not confined to domestic politics. He had to ascertain the attitude of the foreign powers, for this was a question of prime importance in the eyes of warlords and bureaucrats. In May 1923, five months before Cao Kun's "election" by wholesale bribery, the American Minister proceeded to Baoding for a personal talk with him. In June, U.S. President Harding expressed the opinion that American banking groups would be willing to help China achieve "unification." Cao Kun turned out to be successful in the "election" and became president, and the American envoy was the first to congratulate him.

Ever since the days of Yuan Shikai, the leaders of the Beiyang clique had always thought that, once recognized by the imperialists, they could do what they liked, — to become a president or an emperor. But with the people becoming increasingly conscious, a government that was dependent on imperialist powers was certain to

lose all popularity. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, in its "Second Statement Concerning the Present Situation," issued after the ousting of Li Yuanhong by Cao Kun, solemnly pointed out:

> What we require is a government established through a revolution by the people. The people will never recognize any government which comes under the control of and is supported by any foreign imperialist power.

Only one year after the "election" of Cao Kun, large-scale fighting again flared up among the warlords. Although the forces of the Zhili clique were in control of Jiangsu Province, the Japanese-backed Zhejiang warlord Lu Yongxiang was holding Shanghai. This situation could not be tolerated by the United States and Britain, and their quisling Zhili clique. In September 1924, what was known as the Jiangsu-Zhejiang war broke out. In this conflict, Lu Yongxiang was defeated and fled to Japan. However, Zhang Zuolin of the Japanese-backed Fengtian clique took advantage of the hostilities to send his armies south of the Great Wall in another bid for power. This led to the second Fengtian-Zhili war, which, so far as the number of troops engaged by both sides was concerned, was unparalleled in the history of China's internecine strife. In essence, this was another big duel in China between Japan and the United States. When the war broke out, the Communist Party of China declared in one of its statements on the current situation issued on September 10, 1924:

> Let us analyse the possible outcome of the present war. Firstly, if victory goes to the Zhili clique, then the United States will help it impose "political unity" upon China, so that it will be possible for the United States to enjoy a clear field in carrying out its economic aggression against China. Secondly, if the Zhili clique loses the war, the Japanese, collaborating with Zhang Zuolin and the Anfu elements, will dominate the politics and economy of China. We detest the first possibility and abhor the second. In either case, it means a growing menace of foreign aggression and of the extinction of China as an independent country. It also means a growing danger of more civil wars, of more people being slaughtered or victimized.[1]

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[1] *Guide*, No. 82.

The Chinese people were now able to see the true face of American imperialism as exposed by hard facts. They had realized that there was no difference between the control of China by American imperialists and control by Japanese imperialists. The war ended in a disaster for the Zhili clique bacause Feng Yuxiang, one of its generals, revolted in the midst of the fighting. Wu Peifu was roundly defeated and Cao Kun lost the presidency. Zhang Zuolin now dominated North China and Duan Qirui, the old tool of Japan, returned to Beijing to take up the job of "Provisional Chief Executive." Feng Yuxiang, who called his forces the Guominjun (National Army) and who had shared the fruits of victory with the Fengtian and Anhui cliques, now emerged as their rival. Wu Peifu's defeat, however, did not mean the complete downfall of the Zhili clique. Though immobilized for the time being, Wu was secretly regrouping his forces in Hunan Province. His behind-the-scenes masters continued to place much hope in him and he was actually preparing to stage a comeback. Commenting on the situation, Sun Yat-sen wrote:

> Routed in the battle near Shanhaiguan, Wu Peifu retreated to Tianjin. He was desperate. The Guominjun was in a position to annihilate his forces and to bring the war to a close. But representatives of a foreign power told Wu Peifu that the Changjiang Valley was their sphere of influence and that if Wu went there he could get their help, and that the prospect was still good. This was the reason why Wu went back to the Changjiang Valley.[1]

The above is an account of how during the years after the Washington Conference, i.e. from 1922 to 1924, the conflicts of various imperialist powers were reflected in the endless wars waged between Chinese warlords. But it shows only one phase of the relations of imperialism and China's politics during these three years. If we viewed things from this angle alone, we might conclude that there was no way out of the ever-recurring vengeful civil wars for supreme power waged by the warlord cliques with the support of the imperialists. But the reality was different. During those three years the struggle of the Chinese people had made great headway, so much so that the imperialist powers and various warlord cliques had be-

[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 62.

gun to take fright even during the second Fengtian-Zhili war when they were faced with a new situation. The question was no longer so much which imperialist group would win. It was who was going to win in the struggle between the Chinese people on the one side and the imperialists and warlords on the other.

5. ANTI-IMPERIALIST MOVEMENTS (1922-1924) BEFORE THE MAY THIRTIETH INCIDENT

In 1922, as we recall, the Communist Party of China at its Second Congress raised the militant slogans "Down with the imperialists!" and "Down with the warlords!" In the same year, the working-class movement in China made giant strides forward, such as had never before been seen in the country's history.

At the beginning of 1922, sixty thousand workers in Hongkong went on strike, persisted in it for eight weeks, and won satisfaction of their demands for higher wages and for the right to form a seamen's union. This strike stimulated the working-class movement throughout China. In the same year the workers struck in cotton mills in Shanghai, at the Hanyang Iron Works (Hubei Province), on the Beijing-Hankou Railway and at the Anyuan Colliery (Jiangxi Province). October saw a walkout of fifty thousand workers of the Kailuan mines (Hebei Province). As the enterprise was financed with British capital, Britain immediately sent troops to Tangshan to reinforce the soldiers and police of the Zhili warlords in their suppression of this strike.

In February 1923, the Beijing-Hankou Railway workers established their trade union. Wu Peifu used armed force to prevent the railwaymen from holding meetings, and the latter went on a protest strike. Thereupon Wu Peifu, backed by the imperialists, carried out a butchery of railway workers at Hankou, Changxindian and Zhengzhou. This large-scale massacre has come to be known as the "February 7 Incident." All these events indicated that the struggle waged by Chinese workers against foreign imperialism and its hirelings, the warlords, was developing with ever growing intensity.

Back in November 1922, thousands of students and workers held a mass meeting in Beijing to mark the fifth anniversary of the October Revolution. They strongly demanded the overthrow of international imperialist yoke in China, a Sino-Soviet alliance and unconditional recognition of the Soviet Union. Students in Hunan, Hubei and Shanxi provinces made similar demands. Although the massacre of February 7, 1923 had been a blow to the working-class movement, the masses of the people continued to press their struggle against imperialism and the warlords, which reached a new peak in 1924.

Voices opposing imperialism and the traitorous warlords came from all parts of the country then under the domination of the Zhili warlords. In July, the Anti-Imperialist League was formed in Beijing, and the Beijing Students' Union and more than fifty other organizations became affiliated to it. Demands for the abrogation of the unequal treaties were echoed by workers, businessmen and students' organizations throughout the country. In August, just before the second Fengtian-Zhili war, more than thirty organizations in Shanghai, including the Shanghai Students' Federation, formed a League for the Abrogation of the Unequal Treaties, as well as an Anti-Imperialist League. Thus, at the time when the warlords, backed by the imperialists, were cutting each other's throats, the people were rising to attack imperialism by storm.

Two important events which took place in 1922-1924, during the upsurge of the Chinese people's revolutionary movement against imperialism were the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the Soviet Union and the reorganization of the Kuomintang and the beginning of its co-operation with the Communist Party of Cbina.

In 1920, the Soviet government had twice proposed to China that diplomatic relations be resumed. But the proposals had been ignored by the Beijing government, then under the control of the Anhui clique. In 1922, while the Zhili warlords were in power, the Soviet government sent a representative to Beijing. His arrival was welcomed enthusiastically by delegates of 21 popular organizations in

the capital but the Beijing government, as before, remained aloof. The Soviet representative then proceeded to Shanghai to meet Sun Yat-sen. The American, Japanese, British and French envoys to China addressed notes to the Beijing government, alleging that the Soviet representative was propagating "radicalism" in China and that such activities should be kept under strict surveillance.

In their efforts to deny the very existence of the Soviet Union, the imperialists stopped at nothing. They wanted to prevent the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the U.S.S.R., being in particular dread of closer friendship between the Chinese and the Soviet peoples and their governments. The armed intervention in Soviet Russia, initiated in 1919 by the combined forces of 14 countries (including China, then under the rule of the Beiyang warlord government), lasted for two and a half years (till 1921), and ended in complete failure. The fact that the power of the workers' and peasants' soviets had succeeded in firmly establishing itself was something the imperialists could no longer deny. Nor could they prevent the triumph of the Soviet power from deeply stirring and influencing the oppressed nations of the East. The mass meetings held in November 1922 in Beijing and elsewhere in China to mark the anniversary of the October Revolution represented a protest against those who were attempting to block the establishment of Sino-Soviet relations.

In July 1923, the Soviet government again sent a representative to Beijing, reaffirming its readiness to relinquish all the special privileges of tsarist Russia and to negotiate with China. The Beijing government could now find no excuse to reject the Soviet proposal. By March 1924, the negotiations had yielded concrete results. In the draft agreement, the Soviet Union unconditionally renounced extraterritorial rights, restored tsarist concessions in Chinese ports to China, relinquished the Russian share of the indemnities under the "Protocol of 1901", and recognized China's tariff autonomy. Never before in the history of foreign relations had China been treated so favourably. Yet the Beijing government, instigated by the imperialists and itself in the hands of the warlords, suddenly demanded the abrogation of Outer Mongolian autonomy as a prerequisite for

any Sino-Soviet agreement. This attitude of the Beijing government, which nearly wrecked the negotiations, met with severe censure throughout China. On March 29, the students in Beijing held a mass protest demonstration. Under popular pressure, the Sino-Soviet agreement was formally concluded on May 31, thus opening a new chapter in the diplomatic history of China.

After Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations were established, the imperialists took every opportunity to disturb them. Under the "Protocol of 1901," a special district known as the "Legation Quarter" had been set up in Beijing, where the legations of various foreign countries were located. Now that diplomatic relations had been established between China and the Soviet Union, it was only natural for the premises of the tsarist legation to be turned over to the new Soviet Ambassador. (The Soviet Union was the first country to exchange ambassadors with China, all others only sent ministers.) But the Diplomatic Corps, on the pretext that the other powers had not recognized the Soviet government, notified the Beijing government that it had decided to take the Russian legation into joint custody and not to permit the Soviet Ambassador to occupy it. This move, of course, was totally unfounded and unwarranted. Its only motive could be to create unpleasantness. One thing it did was to provide the Chinese people with another opportunity for seeing more clearly just who was their friend and who their enemy.

Here we must return to the revolutionary activities of Sun Yatsen.

No longer able to tolerate the "constitutional" government in Guangzhou where he had had to co-operate with warlords and bureaucrats, Sun had gone to Shanghai in 1918. In 1920, after Chen Jiongming's army took Guangzhou and drove out Cen Chunxuan and other Guangxi warlords, he returned to Guangzhou. There, in 1921 he formed the "emergency" government and assumed the post of "emergency" president of the republic. During this period the Beijing government was under the joint control of the Zhili and Fengtian cliques. Before the war between these two cliques broke out in 1922, the Zhili warlords conspired with Chen Jiongming who

brought about a mutiny against Sun Yat-sen. Sun fled back to Shanghai, narrowly escaping with his life.

Sun Yat-sen was undismayed by the repeated failures of the revolutionary cause. He applied himself relentlessly to the question of what path he should follow in order to lead the Chinese revolution to the success for which he hoped. When he formed the "emergency" government at Guangzhou, it was obvious that the May Fourth Movement of 1919 and the student and other mass actions that followed it had had a great impact on him. The Guangzhou government abolished certain police measures and other regulations against strikes and no longer hampered the activities of the labour movement. It appeared much more progressive than the Beijing government or any other local warlord government. Nonetheless the Guangzhou government of that day was not anchored in the strength of the masses. Chen Jiongming, a Guangdong warlord, had been put in the place of the Guangxi warlords, that was all. It was Chen Jiongming's revolt which really opened Sun Yat-sen's eyes, enabling him to see that this warlord's defection was not only the work of the Zhili clique. In Chen's treacherous plot, the sinister hand of foreign imperialism could be seen.

From the autumn of 1922 to early 1923, Sun Yat-sen was in Shanghai. This was the period in which he made considerable advance in his revolutionary ideas. The movement of the working class and the masses, against inperialism and the warlords and for democracy, was unfolding with fire and fury. The Communist Party of China, which had come into existence only a short time ago, had just proposed a democratic united front of various classes against imperialism and the warlords. The criminal record of the traitorous Beijing government dominated by the Zhili warlords which terrorized the people in collusion with the imperialists was becoming increasingly clear. In contrast, the Soviet representative in China was seeking to build up friendship based on the principle of equality and mutual aid with the Chinese people. All this attracted the attention of Sun Yat-sen, a bourgeois democratic revolutionary. Pursuing the policy of a national democratic united front, members of the Chinese Communist Party began to establish contact with him.

In September 1922, Sun convened a meeting in Shanghai to discuss the reorganization of the Kuomintang. This meeting was attended by members of the Communist Party. In January 1923, he issued the Kuomintang Manifesto which, in addition to putting forward a programme of democracy, first enunciated the principle "of striving for the revision of existing treaties to restore China to the status of a free and equal member in the family of nations" as a basic tenet of the Kuomintang with regard to foreign policy. At that time, Sun Yat-sen was in consultation with the Soviet representative. This had the effect of impelling the Beijing government to restore diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. It was then also that Sun began to frame his Three Great Policies — unity with the Soviet Union, and with the Communist Party of China, and assistance to the workers and peasants. In February 1923, immediately after Chen Jiongming was defeated and driven out of Guangzhou, Sun Yat-sen again returned to that city and began reorganizing the Kuomintang.

Having completed the reorganization undertaken to enable it to co-operate with the Communist Party of China, the Kuomintang held its First National Congress in January 1924. The Manifesto issued by the Congress accepted, as its main tenet, the programme of democratic revolution put forward by the Communist Party of China. It reviewed the black record of foreign imperialists and the warlords, who conspired and worked hand in glove to destroy China. It pointed out more clearly than the Manifesto of 1923 that the fundamental direction of the Chinese revolution should be to rely on the "majority of the people" to wage "the struggle against imperialism."

The Guangzhou government after the reorganization of the Kuomintang was not without serious shortcomings, both with regard to its composition and its practical activities. But having correctly charted the direction of the revolution in China, it gradually became the rallying-point around which the fighting strength of the whole Chinese people was united and mobilized. This made the Guangzhou government a thorn in the side of imperialism, an obstacle which the warlords strove hard to remove.

In the course of the second Fengtian-Zhili war, the Fengtian warlords, aiming at overthrowing the Zhili clique and winning the sympathy of the people, expressed their willingness to co-operate with the Guangzhou government. After the downfall of the Zhili clique the new rulers in Beijing, Duan Qirui and Zhang Zuolin invited Sun Yat-sen to the capital to consult on national affairs. Their original idea was to soften him up. But when Sun presently left for Beijing, both in his Manifesto Concerning the Trip North and in speeches delivered at various places on the way, he stated his political views boldly and explicitly. These views made the imperialists and warlords tremble. A reading of excerpts from the Manifesto Concerning the Trip North will show why.

The Manifesto began with a statement on the expedition against the North which the Guangzhou government had announced earlier in 1924:

> On September 18 of this year, our Party issued a declaration to explain the objectives of our northern expedition. The mainpoint of that declaration was that the aim of our national revolution was the creation of an independent and free China, which would safeguard the interests of our country and our people. This aim can never be reconciled with the aim of the imperialists who are attempting to reduce China to a permanent colony. . . . In the past 13 years many warlords have risen and fallen, but all of them, from Yuan Shikai to Cao Kun and Wu Peifu, have been birds of a feather. Thus, the objective of our northern expedition is not only to overthrow Cao Kun and Wu Peifu, but what is more important, to make sure that none shall emerge to follow in their footsteps after they are thrown out. In other words, the purpose of the expedition is not only to overthrow the warlords but also to drive out imperialism upon which the warlords in China depend for their existence. . . .

This declaration made it plain that Sun Yat-sen would not tolerate the warlords Duan Qirui and Zhang Zuolin and their kind. To warlords who still banked on imperialist help to oppress the people, Sun sounded a warning:

> Since the days of Yuan Shikai, the warlords have inflated their armed forces with the assistance of imperialist powers. They may be the protégés of imperialists at the peak of their power, but when they fall not even imperialists can save them. . . . The patronage of imperialism can never be a match for the awakening of the people.

> Only at the time our people were not awakened did the imperialists dare plot against us. Only at such times also were the warlords able to have their way. In the end none of them can avoid being overcome by the politically awakened people. . . .

The Manifesto then put forth a great, ever-victorious formula for the Chinese revolution:

> We have yet another proof that the armed forces allied with imperialism are doomed to failure, while those which ally themselves with the people to accelerate the progress of national revolution will always triumph. We must now enter a new era of our national revolution, to put an end to the situation in which the armed forces are allied with imperialism; and call into existence a new state of affairs that the armed forces will at first ally themselves with the people and then become the armed forces of the people. Only thus can our national revolution be crowned with success.[1]

After his arrival in Beijing, Sun Yat-sen fell ill. On March 12, 1925, he died. Two months after his death, the May Thirtieth Incident[2] gave rise to a patriotic, anti-imperialist mass movement in Shanghai. The storm of revolution swept the whole of China.

Studying the life of Sun Yat-sen, we see that, at times, he had illusions about imperialist powers. At such times he tended to compromise with the dark forces of the decaying society — the feudal warlords; and failed really to rouse the masses of the people to a resolute revolutionary struggle. But by learning from his failures and thanks to the help of the Chinese Communist Party, he rid himself of such illusions. Finally, he allied himself with the political party

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[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, pp. 65-66.

[2] In May 1925 major strikes broke out in Japanese-owned textile mills in Qingdao and Shanghai, which the Japanese imperialists and their lackeys, the Northern warlords, proceeded to suppress. On May 15 the Japanese textile mill owners shot and killed the worker Gu Zhenghong and wounded a dozen others. On May 28 eight workers were slaughtered by the reactionary government in Qingdao. On May 30 more than 2,000 students in Shanghai agitated in the foreign concessions in support of the workers and for the recovery of the foreign concessions. They rallied more than 10,000 people before the British police headquarters shouting slogans like "Down with imperialism!" and "People of China, unite!" The British imperialist police opened fire, killing and wounding many students. This became known as the May 30 Massacre. It immediately roused country-wide indignation, and demonstrations and strikes of workers, students and shopkeepers were held everywhere, forming a tremendous anti-imperialist movement.

of the working class, and thereby took his stand against the aggressive forces of imperialism. He came to realize clearly that, with genuine reliance on the strength of the people, there was nothing to fear from imperialism, however powerful it might be. In this lies the greatness of Sun Yat-sen.

6. INTIMIDATION AND BRIBERY

The two weapons wielded in China by the imperialists were armed force and money. They brandished them to back their lackeys, the reactionary warlord rulers. They used the same weapons to subdue the Chinese people and to check the Chinese revolution.

Armed force had been employed by the imperialists to suppress the Taiping and Yi He Tuan uprisings. The unequal treaties vested them with the "legal" right to station troops on Chinese soil and freely to sail their fleets along the coast and inland waterways of China. Whenever the warlord rulers in China were powerless to suppress the people, the imperialists were always in a position to step in with arms.

Another means used by the imperialists to frustrate the revolution in China was financial power, or in plain words the buying over of vacillating elements and renegade leaders in the revolutionary camp. From the days of the Qing Dynasty, all reactionary governments in China had claimed that it was impossible to solve financial difficulties without foreign loans. A revolutionary government had to make a resolute break with this tradition and rely on its own efforts with the support of the masses in solving difficulties. Otherwise, it could be blinded by the financial power of the imperialists and succumb to their temptations.

The Nanjing government created by the 1911 Revolution, even though it might have been free from the charge of having been bought over by the imperialists, fell largely because it was panic-stricken when the imperialists refused to make a loan (see Chapter IV, Section 2).

With these two weapons — money and armed force — the imperialists dreamed that they could always have their way in China.

After the May Fourth Movement of 1919, the imperialists, concerting their efforts with those of the warlords, repeatedly resorted to the direct use of armed force to suppress the widespread movements of the Chinese people. In November 1919, for instance, the Japanese imperialists organized a massacre at Fuzhou (see Chapter VI, Section 1). In November 1922, the British imperialists used force to crush a strike that had broken out in the coal mines at Tangshan (see Chapter VI, Section 5). In June 1923, in the June First Massacre in Hunan Province, Japanese seamen from the gunboat "Fushimi" landed at Changsha, and opened fire on the people who persisted in boycotting Japanese goods. Many casualties resulted.

As for the co-operation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China, the imperialists did not for a moment cease to try to undermine and hinder it. After 1923, Sun Yat-sen, helped by the Chinese Communist Party, began to carry out his Three Great Policies and took a firm stand against imperialism. Guangzhou was transformed into a centre of the Chinese revolution. The imperialists then grew ever more brazen in their joint interference with the Guangzhou government and the revolutionary movement of the Chinese people.

Prior to 1923, the Guangzhou government had included a number of pro-Japanese bureaucrats as well as pro-British and pro-American politicians and warlords. To the imperialists the government as then constituted was not absolutely intolerable, but Sun Yat-sen was always an object of their hostility. H.O. Chapman, a British journalist then in China, wrote of their attitude:

> Dr. Sun had many British and American friends and sympathizers; but these were not inclined to support an insurrection against a friendly government in Peking which was recognized by their own, besides which most of them regard Sun as an impractical visionary.[1]

Sun Yat-sen himself had once thought that his revolutionary cause would receive the help of "democratic" countries in the West. It seemed that he found a few "friends and sympathizers," but

[1] H. O. Chapman, *The Chinese Revolution (1926-27)*, p. 42.

eventually he was disappointed, and these "democratic" countries even tried to undermine his revolutionary efforts. The Lattimores wrote:

> During these years of trouble Sun Yat-sen continued his work, though regarded by the western powers as an ineffective visionary. . . . Time after time the revolutionary movement was checked when Sun Yat-sen was abandoned, or even driven out, by some militarist who had worked with him only long enough to get a few troops under his command, or when foreign interests, alarmed by the growth of his "subversive" movement, began to threaten or bribe his political followers.[1]

The bribery of Chen Jiongming by the imperialists to revolt against Sun Yat-sen serves as an example. After driving Sun from Guangzhou, Chen Jiongming received a loan of £7,000,000 from Britain, in return for which he undertook to link up the Guangzhou-Hankou and the Guangzhou-Kowloon Railways.

From 1923 on, imperialist interference with the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese people led by Sun Yat-sen became still more brazen and ferocious. In December of that year, the question of "the retention by the Guangzhou government of customs surplus" led to a show of force by the powers. It was then the practice for the foreign commissioners of customs to have direct control of customs revenue collections, deduct the sums required for the payment of the indemnities under the "Protocol of 1901" and other loans and obligations, and hand over the remainder, known as customs surplus, to the Beijing government. After the Guangzhou government was formed in 1917, it was given a share of the customs surplus, amounting to 13.7 per cent of the total. The purpose of the powers, it goes without saying, was to buy the Guangzhou government with this share. It was a good bargain for the imperialist powers to attain their political aims with money that belonged to China. By 1923, however, the powers felt that the Guangzhou government was becoming less and less what they had hoped it would be, and therefore was not worthy of receiving a single penny (even though all the money was Chinese). Its request for the usual share of the customs surplus was therefore turned down by the diplomatic corps in Bei-

[1] Owen and Eleanor Lattimore, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

jing. The Guangzhou government then took matters into its own hands and retained the revenues of the Guangzhou customs. The diplomatic corps in Beijing went so far as to lodge a protest in which it attacked this action as a violation of the integrity of the customs administration, and threatened to take strong measures if it was persisted in. To this protest the Guangzhou government replied:

> The customs have always been a Chinese government institution. The customs at ports under the control of this government should naturally abide by the orders of this government. Furthermore, the remittance of customs revenues to Beijing is tantamount to helping the Beijing government with a war fund.[1]

In response to the strong attitude of the Guangzhou government, the United States and Britain each sent seventeen warships to Baietan (near Guangzhou) as a demonstration of force. This aroused mass indignation in Guangzhou, where mammoth meetings endorsed the stand taken by the government. A boycott of American and British goods was declared.

On this "customs surplus" question the imperialists resorted to financial and military pressure. They used both of their weapons, money and armed force. Then, in the "Guangzhou Merchant Corps" incident of August 1924, they took a further step in their plot against the Chinese revolution.

The "Guangzhou Merchant Corps" was an organization of the comprador bourgeoisie, headed by a certain Chen Lianbo (Chan Lim-pak), a comprador of the British-owned Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. At first the "merchant corps" threatened the Guangzhou government with "suspension of business." Later, it staged an armed riot the purpose of which was to overthrow the revolutionary government with one blow. The imperialists were behind the whole affair from beginning to end. We quote Sun Yat-sen:

> A few months ago certain foreigners in Hongkong were blowing the trumpet for Chen Lianbo, calling him the Washington of China, and saying that Guangzhou would soon have a "fascist" government. In their newspapers, the foreigners incite the "merchant corps" to fight the government which, they allege, will lead to Communism unless crushed in

[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 1, p. 42.

time. Recently, they helped Chen Lianbo float bonds amounting to two million dollars, guaranteed by their banks.[1]

And further:

> During the past two years, some Englishmen have expressed their dissatisfaction with the Kuomintang and with the consolidation of the Kuomintang government. They have instigated Chen Lianbo to organize a revolt by the "merchant corps" against the Kuomintang government in Guangzhou. . . . As he (Chen Lianbo) is a comprador of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, he is acquainted with those Englishmen who are against the Kuomintang. They have been persuading him daily to revolt against the government, saying: "If you succeed in inducing the 'merchant corps' to rise against the government, Britain will help you to organize a government ruled by merchants, and you will become the Washington of China." Chen listened to them, bought arms abroad, and attempted to form an army of his own. The first consignment of his arms was brought to Guangzhou in a Danish freighter. . . .[2]

The matter did not end there. The moment the Guangzhou government took resolute steps to suppress the rebellion of the "merchant corps," Chen Lianbo's foreign masters appeared on the scene and protested. In a "Statement Concerning the Merchant Corps Incident" Sun Yat-sen said:

> On August 29, the British Consul-General addressed a note to the Guangzhou government, pointing out that the consular body at Shamian was protesting against the "wanton" act of bombarding an open city. The concluding part of the note was tantamount to a declaration of war. It said that the British naval commander had informed the British Consul-General that instructions had been received from the Commander-in-Chief of the British Fleet in Hongkong to the effect that, should the Chinese authorities fire upon the city, all available British naval forces would immediately go into action. . . . What a revelation of imperialist frenzy![3]

This "merchant corps" incident, engineered by the imperialists, fell through because the revolutionary elements of the Guangzhou government stood their ground and promptly exposed it. But it would be a mistake to conclude that the imperialists did not achieve anything. The weekly *Guide* pointed out:

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[1] *Complete Works of Sun Yat-sen* (in Chinese), Vol. 2, p. 62.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

> In spite of the resolute statement by Sun Yat-sen, in spite of the fact that the hue and cry against imperialism had reached such heights in Guangzhou, the Guangzhou government rescinded the order for the arrest of the two Chens (Chen Lianbo and Chen Gongshou), the jackals of the imperialists, and, soon after this announcement, returned to them their property. It also decided to return the arms to the "merchant corps," the tool of the British imperialists. The Guangzhou government appointed Li Fulin, who enjoyed the support of compradors and merchants, as mayor, and Li Langru, a merchant with criminal connections, as chief of the bureau of public safety. All this was a big concession to British imperialists. Yet in spite of it the British imperialists continued to plot the overthrow of the Sun Yat-sen government. . . . Recently seven warships arrived from Britain and dropped anchor in Guangzhou . . . to bolster up their tools — the warlords and the comprador class. . . .[1]

The reorganization of the Kuomintang and its co-operation with the Communist Party of China marked the formation of a democratic revolutionary united front (comprising the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie). The enemies of the revolution, headed by the imperialists, missed no opportunity to undermine this united front. The "merchant corps" incident was not just an armed rebellion staged by a few compradors, it was supported by imperialists. It was also backed by a group of local warlords and right-wing politicians within the Guangzhou government. As pointed out by the *Guide*, this incident "was brought about jointly by imperialists, the comprador class, the mercenary warlords, and right-wing elements within the Kuomintang in an attempt to crush the revolutionary government." These right-wing elements, it stressed further, "conspired with the warlords and based their hopes on the imperialists. . . . The rebellion of the 'merchant corps' was entirely the work of these counter-revolutionary right-wing elements. Only outsiders know little of this."[2]

The disintegration of the Guangzhou government into right and left factions was the outcome of the change in internal politics. The imperialists, knowing what was going on, not only made the best use of the situation, but further aggravated it by means of blackmail and bribery. The "merchant corps" rebellion, to all appearances, had

[1] *Guide*, No. 92.
[2] *Ibid.*, No. 82.

been crushed. But the imperialists had only intended it as a try-out which served to strengthen their line-up with the right reaction. They understood that the revolution in China might be crushed either by grooming the old Beiyang warlords to attack it from without or by backing the right wing forces in the revolution so as to divide and break up the revolutionary camp from within. Hence, after the "merchant corps" incident of 1924 and Sun Yat-sen's departure North and his death in 1925, the internal disintegration of the Guangzhou government began to develop rapidly, and soon came right out into the open. Thus the seed was sown for the big split of 1927. Had it not been for the May Thirtieth Movement in 1925, which resulted in an unprecedented upsurge of the mass struggle against imperialism and the warlords, the revolutionary cause would probably have met with a reverse even earlier.

The "merchant corps" rebellion lasted from August to October 1924, coinciding with the second Fengtian-Zhili war in the North. As has been indicated, this war between two warlord cliques reflected the conflict between the American and Japanese imperialists. In the course of it, however, both the imperialists and warlords saw that the revolutionary strength of the Chinese people was growing rapidly. They began to realize, therefore, that what was of vital interest to them was not which clique should win the war, but how to band together to crush the people who had risen with such force. The result of the war clearly showed that Duan Qirui and Zhang Zuolin, the tools of Japan and new rulers in Beijing, were too weak to "unify" China. Wu Peifu, supported by the United States and Britain, had suffered a defeat but was still influential in the Changjiang Valley and there was a good chance of his "return to power." The imperialists decided it was high time for them to compose their differences and prepared to "unite" for a common purpose — the plunder of the Chinese people.

In May 1924, the British-owned *North-China Daily News* of Shanghai called for a "punitive war" against China. It said that if the other powers declined to take part in such a war, it should be waged by the United States and Britain alone. The repeated show

of force against the Guangzhou government was obviously just a prelude to a "punitive war" of this kind.

In April of the same year, the foreign envoys in China had met for secret consultations, after which they had proposed to their respective governments to form three combined fleets to be stationed along the Liaodong-Zhili-Shandong coast in the North, on the Changjiang River in Central China, and along the Zhejiang-Fujian-Guangdong coast in the South. The United States zealously set about carrying out this plan. On April 15, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill providing for the construction of six new gunboats for service in China. On December 24, the U.S. Senate approved an additional budget appropriation of U.S. $110,000,000 for army and naval expenditure, and decided to put eight more warships into service on the Changjiang. In August, Charles Evans Hughes, the American Secretary of States, went to London, where the powers held formal consultations regarding the co-ordination of their China policies. The *China Press* of Shanghai printed a news dispatch from London which said that Washington and London were contemplating concerted action to be taken by the powers to restore peace and order in China. Another dispatch on the same day said that certain influential quarters had strongly urged inviting the different hostile cliques in China to a peace conference with a view to solving their internal political difficulties and establishing a "decentralized federal government" in China. It was hoped, the news item continued, that this plan would bring about a sufficiently stable government to enable the new Consortium to make investments in China so as to reform the country.[1]

In November, representatives of the United States, Britain, France, Belgium and Japan again met in London to discuss the "China issue." The American representative proposed to introduce the "Dawes Plan" into China, thus placing China's natural resources and finance under the joint control of the imperialist powers. A plan for the joint management of Chinese railways, which had

[1] *Guide*, No. 82.

been widely discussed several years earlier, was again brought up at this conference.

On his trip to the North at the end of 1924, Sun Yat-sen raised the slogan "Oppose imperialism!" and put forward concrete proposals for the "abrogation of the unequal treaties" and "convocation of a national convention." Everywhere in China, from the South to the North, his call met a great response. In face of this situation, the imperialist powers started negotiations with the Beijing government. They recognized Duan Qirui as the Chief Executive but demanded that he formally declare his readiness to observe all the unequal treaties. Duan's government issued a proclamation about "keeping faith with foreigners," pouring cold water on the trip Sun Yat-sen was to make to the North.

The imperialists, on the other hand, launched an open campaign against Sun Yat-sen. When he was passing through Shanghai, the foreign newspapers in Shanghai greeted him with abuse. The American-run *China Press* printed "demands" to the following effect:

1. Drive Sun Yat-sen out of Shanghai. Do not allow him pass the winter here.
2. Ignore Sun Yat-sen's proposal regarding the abrogation of the unequal treaties.
3. All unequal treaties should remain in force, because China is still in a state of "internal disorder."

Imperialism had completely exposed its sinister face. At a most crucial point of the conflict between the revolution and the counter-revolution in China, the imperialists were trying, with increasing ferocity, openly to crush the Chinese revolution and to undermine it from within.

Such was the situation on the eve of the outbreak of the First Revolutionary Civil War of 1925-1927.

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IMPERIALISM AND CHINESE POLITICS

Hu Sheng

This book discusses one of the basic questions of modern Chinese political and revolutionary history — the political relationship between the imperialist powers, particularly the American imperialists, and semi-colonial China. Based on extensive historical research of the period between the Opium War (1840-42) and the First Revolutionary Civil War (1924-27), it analyzes how the imperialists sought and created political leverage in China, how the reactionary Chinese rulers and the Chinese people reacted differently in the face of these foreign pressures, and how the illusions of reformist factions hindered the Chinese people's revolutionary cause.

This book not only describes the imperialist powers' political invasions of China, but also reflects the Chinese people's fight against these invasions to win national independence, democracy and freedom.

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